

The Digital Photography Book: The Step-By-Step Secrets for How to Make Your Photos Look Like the Pros'!

By Scott Kelby

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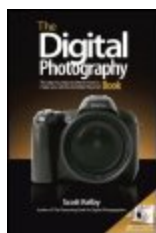
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Overview

Scott Kelby, the man who changed the "digital darkroom" forever with his groundbreaking, #1 bestselling, award-winning book *The Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers*, now tackles the most important side of digital photography--how to take pro-quality shots using the same tricks today's top digital pros use (and it's easier than you'd think). This entire book is written with a brilliant premise, and here's how Scott describes it: "If you and I were out on a shoot, and you asked me, 'Hey, how do I get this flower to be in focus, but I want the background out of focus?' I wouldn't stand there and give you a lecture about aperture, exposure, and depth of field. In real life, I'd just say, 'Get out your telephoto lens, set your f/stop to f/2.8, focus on the flower, and fire away.' You'd say, 'OK,' and you'd get the shot. That's what this book is all about. A book of you and I shooting, and I answer the questions, give you advice, and share the secrets I've learned just like I would with a friend, without all the technical explanations and without all the techno-photo-speak." This isn't a book of theory; it isn't full of confusing jargon and detailed concepts: this is a book of which button to push, which setting to use, when to use them, and nearly two hundred of the most closely guarded photographic "tricks of the trade" to get you shooting dramatically better-looking, sharper, more colorful, more professional-looking photos with your digital camera every time you press the shutter button. Here's another thing that makes this book different: each page covers just one trick, just one single concept that makes your photography better. Every time you turn the page, you'll learn another pro setting, another pro tool, another pro trick to transform your work from snapshots into gallery prints. There's never been a book like it, and if you're tired of taking shots that look "OK," and if you're tired of looking in photography magazines and thinking, "Why don't my shots look like that?" then this is the book for you.



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Dedication

Dedicated to the amazing Dr. Stephanie Van Zandt for her excellent advice, for taking such good care of my wife, and for delivering the sweetest little baby girl in the whole world.



Acknowledgments

Although only one name appears on the spine of this book, it takes a team of dedicated and talented people to pull a project like this together. I'm not only delighted to be working with them, but I also get the honor and privilege of thanking them here.

This is my 37th book, and in each book I write, I always start by thanking my amazing, wonderful, beautiful, hilarious, and absolutely brilliant wife Kalebra. She probably stopped reading these acknowledgments 20 or more books ago because I keep gushing on and on about her, and despite how amazingly beautiful, charming, and captivating she is, she's a very humble person (which makes her even more beautiful). And even though I know she probably won't read this, I just have to thank her anyway because not only could I not do any of this without her, I simply wouldn't want to. She's just "it." It's her voice, her touch, her smile, her heart, her generosity, her compassion, her sense of humor, and the way she sneaks around behind the scenes trying to make sure my life is that much better, that much more fun, that much more fulfilling, and you just have to adore someone like that. She is the type of woman love songs are written for, and as any of my friends will gladly attest I am, without a doubt, the luckiest man alive to have her as my wife. I love you madly, sweetheart!

I also want to thank my crazy, fun-filled, wonderful little nine-year-old boy Jordan. He won't read this either, because as he says, "It embarrasses him." And since I know he won't read it (or even let me read it to him), I can safely gush about him, too. Dude, you rock! You are about the coolest little boy any dad could ask for you love *Star Wars* (and our lightsaber battles in the kitchen), you dig Bon Jovi, you're always up for a game of golf, you love to go to the movies with me, and you get as excited about life as I do. You are nothing but a joy, I'm so thrilled to be your dad, and you're already a great big brother to your new little sister. I am very, very proud of you little buddy.

I also want to thank my beautiful daughter Kira, who is the best-natured, happiest little baby girl in the whole wide world. You're only five months old, but you're already reflecting your mom's sweet nature, her beautiful smile, and her loving heart. You're too young to know what an amazing mother you have, but before long, just like your brother, you'll realize that your mom is someone very special, and that thanks to her you're in for a really fun, exciting, hug-filled, and adventure-filled life. Also, thanks to my big brother Jeff. Brothers don't get much better than you, and that's why Dad was always so proud of you. You are truly one of the "good guys" and I'm very, very lucky to have you in my life.

Special thanks to my home team at KW Media Group. I love working with you guys and you make coming into work an awful lot of fun for me. I'm so proud of what you all do how you come together to hit our sometimes impossible deadlines, and as always, you do it with class, poise, and a can-do attitude that is truly inspiring. I'm honored to be working with you all.

Thanks to my layout and production crew. In particular, I want to thank my friend and Creative Director Felix Nelson (creator of all things that look cool). Thanks to my in-house editors Kim Doty and Cindy Snyder, who put the techniques through rigorous testing and tried to stop me from slipping any of my famous typos past the goalie. Also, thanks to Dave Damstra and his amazing crew for giving the book such a tight, clean layout.

My personal thanks to my friend Dave Gales who shot the product shots for the book. Ya know, for a photojournalist, you're not a bad studio guy. Thanks a million!

Thanks to my best buddy Dave Moser, whose tireless dedication to creating a quality product makes every project we do better than the last. Thanks to Jean A. Kendra for her steadfast support, and an extra special thanks to my Executive Assistant Kathy Siler for keeping everything running smoothly while I'm out traveling and writing books. You are, without a doubt, the best!

Thanks to my publisher Nancy Ruenzel, marketing maverick Scott Cowlin, production hound Ted Waitt, and the incredibly dedicated team at Peachpit Press. It's a real honor to get to work with people who really just want to make great books. Also, my personal thanks to Patrick Lor at iStockphoto.com for enabling me to use some of their wonderful photography in this book.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to my good friend Bill Fortney for agreeing to give the book a good "once over" and it's infinitely better because of his comments, ideas, and input. Bill is just an amazing individual, a world-class photographer, a testament to how to live one's life, and I'm truly honored to have gotten the chance to work with someone of his caliber, integrity, and faith.

I want to thank all the talented and gifted photographers who've taught me so much over the years, including Moose Peterson, Vincent Versace, Bill Fortney, David Ziser, Jim DiVitali, Helene Glassman, George Lepp, and Eddie Tapp.

Thanks to my mentors whose wisdom and whip-cracking have helped me immeasurably, including John Graden, Jack Lee, Dave Gales, Judy Farmer, and Douglas Poole.

Most importantly, I want to thank God, and His son Jesus Christ, for leading me to the woman of my dreams, for blessing us with such a special little boy and an amazing little girl, for allowing me to make a living doing something I truly love, for always being there when I need Him, for blessing me with a wonderful, fulfilling, and happy life, and such a warm, loving family to share it with.

 **PREV**

NEXT 

Other Books By Scott Kelby

The Photoshop CS2 Book for Digital Photographers

Photoshop Down & Dirty Tricks

Photoshop CS2 Killer Tips

The Photoshop Channels Book

Photoshop Classic Effects

The iPod Book

The Adobe Lightroom eBook for Digital Photographers

InDesign CS/CS2 Killer Tips

Mac OS X Tiger Killer Tips

Getting Started with Your Mac and Mac OS X Tiger

About The Author

Scott Kelby



Scott is Editor-in-Chief and Publisher of *Photoshop User* magazine, Editor-in-Chief of *Nikon Software User* magazine, Editor and Publisher of *Layers* magazine (the how-to magazine for everything Adobe), and co-host of the popular weekly video show *Adobe® Photoshop® TV*.

Scott is President and co-founder of the National Association of Photoshop Professionals (NAPP) and is President of the software training, education, and publishing firm KW Media Group.

Scott is a photographer, designer, and an award-winning author of more than 35 books, including *The Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers*, *Photoshop Down & Dirty Tricks*, *The Photoshop Channels Book*, *Photoshop Classic Effects*, *The iPod Book*, and is Series Editor for the *Killer Tips* book series from New Riders.

Scott's books have been translated into dozens of different languages, including Russian, Chinese, French, Dutch, Korean, Spanish, Polish, Czechoslovakian, Greek, German, Japanese, Italian, and Swedish, among others.

For two years straight, Scott has been awarded the distinction of being the world's #1 best-selling author of all computer and technology books, across all categories.

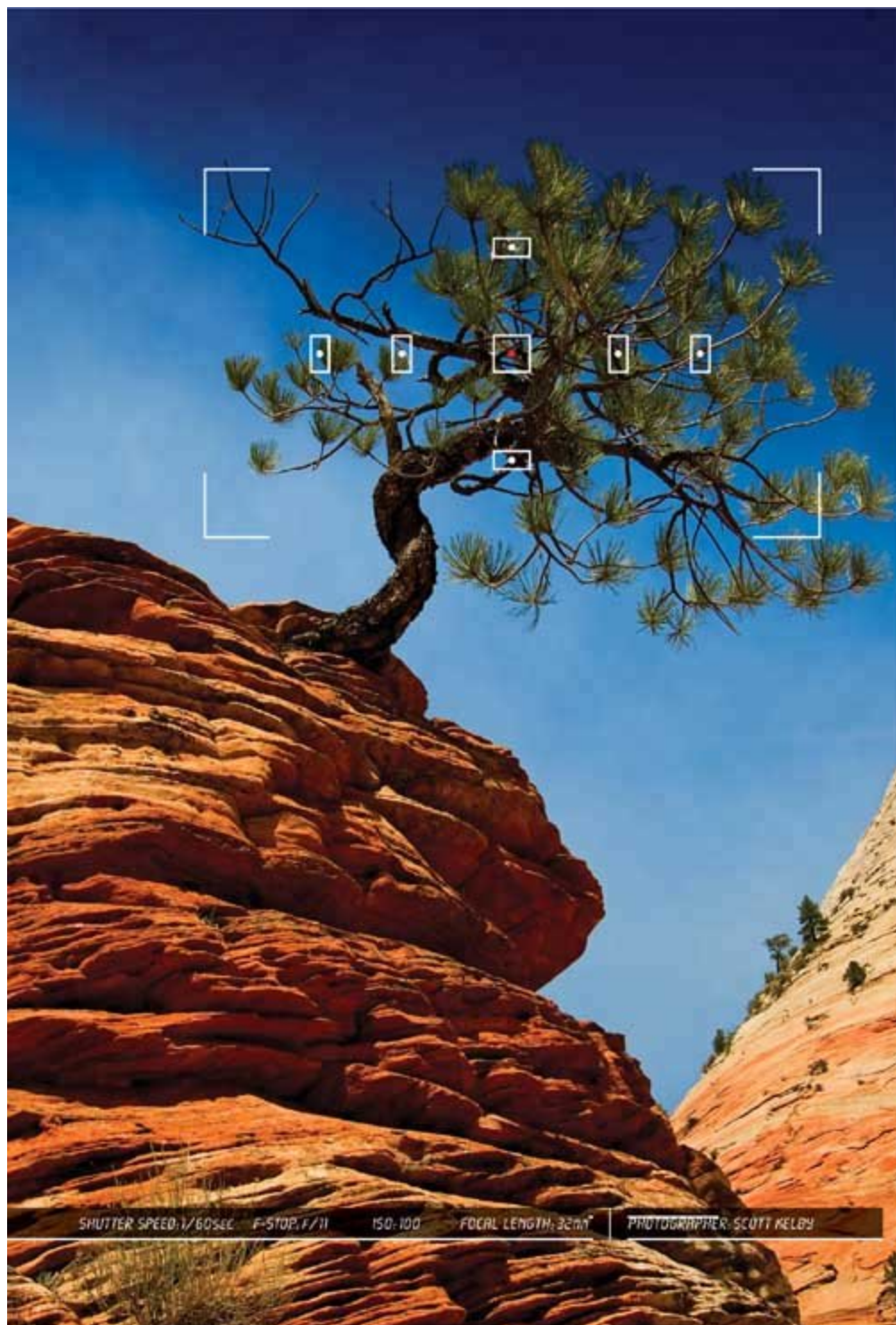
Scott is Training Director for the Adobe Photoshop Seminar Tour and Conference Technical Chair for the Photoshop World Conference & Expo. He's featured in a series of Adobe Photoshop training DVDs and has been training Adobe Photoshop users since 1993.


For more information on Scott, visit www.scottkelby.com.

Chapter One. Pro Tips for Getting Really Sharp Photos

If Your Photos Aren't Sharp, the Rest Doesn't Matter

[\[View full size image\]](#)



 Having photos that are sharp and in focus is so vitally important to pro photographers that they actually have coined a term for them. They call them "tack sharp." When I first heard that term tossed around years ago, I naturally assumed that it was derived from the old phrase "sharp as a tack," but once I began writing this book and doing some serious research into its history, I was shocked and surprised at what I found. First of all, it's not based on the "sharp as a tack" phrase at all. Tack sharp is actually an acronym. TACK stands for Technically Accurate Cibachrome Kelvin (which refers to the color temperature of light in photographs), and SHARP stands for Shutter Hyperfocal At Refracted Polarization. Now, these may seem like highly technical terms at first, but once you realize that I totally made them up, it doesn't seem so complicated, does it? Now, you have to admit, it sounded pretty legitimate at first. I mean, I almost had ya, didn't I? Come on, you know I had you, and I'll

bet it was that "color temperature of light" thing I put in parenthesis that helped sell the idea that it was real, right? It's okay to admit you were fooled, just like it's okay to admit that you've taken photos in the past that weren't tack sharp (just in case you were wondering, the term "tack sharp" is actually formed from the Latin phrase *tantus saeta equina* which means "there's horsehair in my tantus"). Anyway, what's really important at this point is whatever you do, keep your spotted palomino away from anything with a sharp, pointy end used to attach paper to a bulletin board. That's all I'm saying.

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The Real Secret to Getting Sharp Photos



BILL FORTINEY

Hey, before we get to "[The Real Secret to Getting Sharp Photos](#)," I need to let you in on a few quick things that will help you big time in getting the most from this book (sorry about duping you with "[The Real Secret to Getting Sharp Photos](#)" headline, but don't worry that subject and more are coming right up, but first I have to make sure you totally understand how this book works. Then it will all make sense and we can worry about sharp photos). The idea is simple: you and I are out on a photo shoot. While we're out shooting, you have lots of questions, and I'm going to answer them here in the book just like I would in real life straight and to the point, without teaching you all the technical aspects and behind-the-scenes technology of digital photography. For example, if we were out shooting and you turned to me and said, "Hey Scott, I want to take a shot where that flower over there is in focus, but the background is out of focus. How do I do that?" I wouldn't turn to you and give you a speech about smaller and larger apertures, about how exposure equals shutter speed plus aperture, or any of that stuff you can read in any book about digital photography (and I mean any book it's in every one). In real life, I'd just turn to you and say, "Put on your zoom lens, set your aperture at f/2.8, focus on the flower, and fire away." That's how this book works. Basically, it's you and me out shooting, and I'm giving you the same tips, the same advice, and the same techniques I've learned over the years from some of the top working pros, but I'm giving it to you in plain English, just like I would in person, to a friend.

The Other Most Important Secret

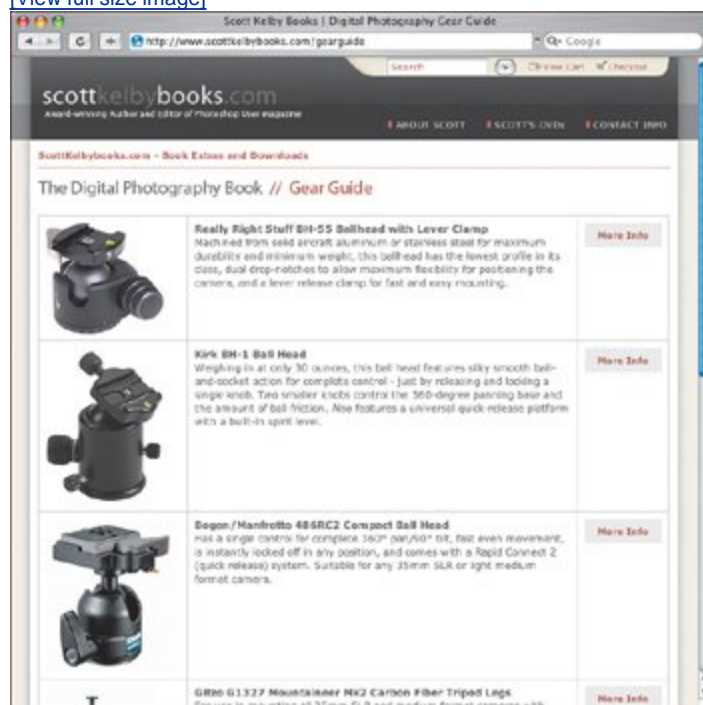


BILL FORTINEY

Again, ignore that headline. It's just a cheap come-on to get you to keep reading. Anyway, that's the scoop. Now, here's another important thing you need to know. To get the kind of quality photos I think you're looking for, sometimes it takes more than changing an adjustment in the camera or changing the way you shoot. Sometimes, you have to buy the stuff the pros use to shoot like a pro. I don't mean you need to buy a new digital camera, but instead, some accessories that the pros use in the field every day. I learned a long time ago that in many fields, like sports for example, the equipment doesn't really make that big a difference. For example, go to Wal-Mart, buy the cheapest set of golf clubs you can, hand them to Tiger Woods, and he's still Tiger Woodsshooting 12 under par on a bad day. However, I've never seen a field where the equipment makes as big a difference as it does in photography. Don't get me wrong, hand Jay Maisel a point-and-shoot camera and he'll take point-and-shoot shots that could hang in a gallery, but the problem is we're not as good as Jay Maisel. So, to level the playing field, sometimes we have to buy accessories (crutches) to make up for the fact that we're not Jay Maisel. Now, I don't get a kickback, bonus, or anything from any of the companies whose products I recommend. I'm giving you the same advice I'd give you if we were out shooting (which is the whole theme behind this book). This is *not* a book to sell you stuff, but before you move forward, understand that to get pro results sometimes you have to use (and that means buy) what the pros use.

Perhaps Even More Important Than That!

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Still a fake headline. Don't let it throw you. Now, although we want pro-quality photos, we don't all have budgets like the pros, so when possible, I break my suggestions down into three categories:



I'm on a budget. These are denoted with this symbol. It simply means you're not loose with money (meaning you're probably married and have kids).



I can swing it. If you see this symbol, it means photography is your passion and you don't mind if your kids have to work a part-time job once they get to college to buy books. So you're willing to spend to have some better-than-average equipment.



If you see this symbol, it means you don't really have a budget (you're a doctor, lawyer, venture capitalist, U.S. Senator, etc.), so I'll just tell you which one I would buy if I was one of those rich bas*%\$#s. (Kidding. Kind of.)

To make things easy, I put up a webpage at www.scottkelbybooks.com/gearguide with direct links to these goodies if you're so inclined. Again, I don't get a red cent if you use these links or buy this stuff, but I don't mind because I made such a killing on you buying this book. Again, I kid. Now, where do these links actually go? (See next page.)

If You Skip This, Throw Away Your Camera

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Hey, how do you like that grabber of a headline? Sweet! Totally a scam, but sweet nonetheless. Now, those links on the webpage lead to one of two places: (1) to the individual manufacturer who sells the product, if they only sell direct, or (2) to B&H Photo's website. So, why B&H? Because I trust them. I've been buying all my personal camera gear from them for years (so do all my friends, and most of the pros I know) and since you're now going to be one of my shooting buddies, this is where I would tell you to go without a doubt. There are three things I like about B&H, and why they have become something of a legend among pro photographers: (1) They carry just about every darn thing you can think of, no matter how small or insignificant it may seem. Lose your Nikon brand lens cap? They've got 'em in every size. Lose your neck strap with Canon stitched on it? They've got them too. Lose that tiny little cap that covers the input for your remote shutter release? They've got it. (2) When you call them, you talk to a real photographer, and my experience is that they give you the real straight scoop on what to buy. I've called up with something in mind, and have had their reps tell me about something better that's cheaper. That's rare these days. And finally (3), their prices are very, very competitive (to say the least). If you're ever in New York City, make it a point to drop by their store. It is absolutely amazing. It's like Disneyland for photographers. I could spend a day there (and I have). Anyway, they're good people. Now, does the headline scam thing continue on the next page? You betcha.

If You Do This Wrong, It Will Lock Up



It's not as good as the last fake headline, but we're only one more page away from the real chapter content, so I'm backing it off a little. Now, once you turn the page you'll notice lots of photos of Nikon and Canon cameras, and it might make you think that I'm partial to these two brands. It's not just me. Apparently most of the world is partial to these two brands, so you'll see lots of shots of them (mostly the Nikon D70s and the Canon 20Dtwo incredible digital cameras for the money, and ones which many working pros use). Now, what if you don't shoot with a Nikon or Canon camera? No sweatmost of the techniques in this book apply to any digital SLR camera, and many of the point-and-shoot digital cameras as well, so if you're shooting with a Sony or an Olympus or a Sigma, don't let it throw you that a Nikon or Canon is pictured. This book is about taking dramatically better photosnot about how to set up your Nikon or Canon, even though since most people are shooting with one or the other, I usually show one or the other camera or menus. So, if I'm talking about white balance, and I'm showing the Canon white balance menu, but you're not shooting with a Canon, simply breathe deeply and say to yourself, "It's okay, my [insert your camera name here] also has a white balance setting and it works pretty much like this one." Remember, it's about choosing the right white balance, not exactly which buttons to push on your camera, because if we were really out shooting together, we might not have the same brand of camera.

It's Time to Get Serious

[\[View full size image\]](#)



I have good news: Not only are we at the end of this "fake headline" thing, you'll also be happy to know that from here on out, the rest of the book isn't laced with the wonderfully inspired (lame) humor you found on these first few pages. Well, the intro page to each chapter has more of this stuff, but it's only one page and it goes by pretty quickly. My books have always had "enlightened" chapter intros (meaning I wrote them when I was plastered) and the chapter names are usually based on movies, song names, or band names (the actual chapter name appears below the fake chapter name). The other reason I do it is because I need a chance to write something that doesn't use any of the terms shutter, aperture, or tripod. In a book like this, there's not much room to interject personality (if you want to call it that), and since the rest of the book is me telling you just what you need to know, there's little time for my brand of humor. In fact, in life there's little time for my brand of humor, so I sneak it in there. I have so little. Anyway, as you turn the page, keep this in mind: I'm telling you these tips just like I'd tell a shooting buddy, and that means oftentimes it's just which button to push, which setting to change, and not a whole lot of reasons why. I figure that once you start getting amazing results from your camera, you'll go out and buy one of those "tell me all about it" digital camera books (see page [192](#) for some suggestions). In all seriousness, I truly hope this book ignites your passion for photography by giving you some insight into how the pros get those amazing shots, and showing you how to get results you always hoped you'd get from your digital photography. Now pack up your gear, it's time to head out for our shoot.

Getting "Tack Sharp" Starts with a Tripod



There's not just one trick that will give you the sharp photos the pros get; it's a combination of things that all come together to give you "tack sharp" shots. (Tack sharp is the term pro photographers use to describe the ultimate level of sharpness. Sadly, we aren't the best at coming up with highly imaginative names for things.) So, while there are a number of things you'll need to do to get tack-sharp photos, the most important is shooting on a tripod. In fact, if there's one single thing that really separates the pros from the amateurs, it's that the pros always shoot on a tripod (even in daylight). Yes, it's more work, but it's the key ingredient that amateurs miss. Pros will do the little things that most amateurs aren't willing to do; that's part of the reason their photos look like they do. Keeping the camera still and steady is a tripod's only job, but when it comes to tripods, some do a lot better job than others. That's why you don't want to skimp on quality. You'll hear pros talking about this again and again, because cheap tripods simply don't do a great job of keeping your camera that steady. That's why they're cheap.

Scott's Gear Finder



Bogen/Manfrotto 3001BD (around \$120)



Bogen/Manfrotto Mag Fiber 055MF3 (around \$400)



Gitzo G1327 Mountaineer Mk2 (around \$600)

A Ballhead Will Make Your Life Easier



Here's the thing: when you buy a pro-quality tripod, you get just the tripod. It doesn't come with a tripod head affixed like the cheap-o tripods do, so you'll have to buy one separately (by the way, this ballhead thing isn't necessarily about getting sharp images, but it is about keeping your sanity, so I thought I'd better throw it in). Ballheads are wonderful because with just one knob they let you quickly and easily aim and position your camera accurately at any angle (which you'll find is a huge advantage). Best of all, good ballheads keep your camera locked down tight to keep your camera from "creeping" (slowly sliding one way or the other) after you've set up your shot. Like tripods, a good ballhead isn't cheap, but if you buy a good one, you'll fall in love with it.

Scott's Gear Finder



Bogen/Manfrotto 486RC2 (around \$65)



Kirk BH-1 (\$355)



Really Right Stuff BH-55 (\$455)

Don't Press the Shutter (Use a Cable Release)



Okay, so now you're lugging around a tripod, but your photos are looking much sharper. Not tack sharp yet, but much sharper. What will take you to the next level of sharpness? A cable release. This is simply a cable that attaches to your digital camera (well, to most semi-pro or high-end consumer dSLRs anyway) and it has a button on the end of it. That way, when you press this button on the end of the cable, it takes the photo, but without you actually touching the shutter button on the camera itself. So, why is this such a big deal? It's because, believe it or not, when you press the shutter button on the camera, it makes the camera move just enough to keep your photos from being tack sharp. I know, it sounds like a little thing, but this one is bigger than it sounds. Using it is easier than you might think, and these days most cameras support wireless remotes too, and they're fairly inexpensive as well. Now your photos are just that much sharper.

Scott's Gear Finder



You can get a vinyl cable release for about 8 bucks.

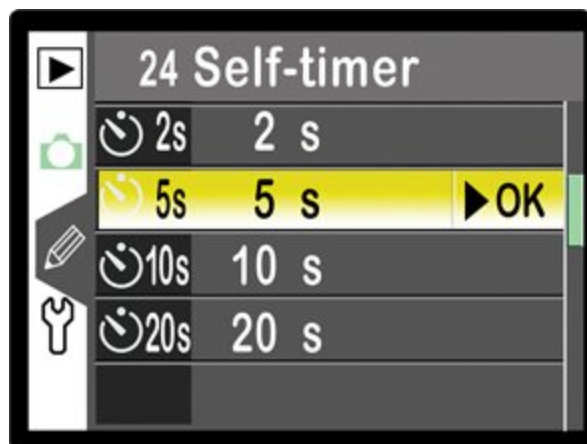


You can get a wireless remote for about \$25.



Get the Nikon high-tech remote for about \$90.

Forgot Your Cable Release? Use a Self Timer



If you don't want to spring for a cable release (or wireless remote), or if you're out shooting and forgot yours (which has happened to me on numerous occasions), then the next best thing is to use your digital camera's built-in self timer. I know, you normally think of using this so you can run and get in the shot real quick, but think about it—what does the self timer do? It takes the shot without you touching the camera, right? Right! So, it pretty much does the same job of keeping your camera from moving—you just have to wait about 10 seconds. If you hate waiting (I sure do), then see if your camera allows you to change the amount of time it waits before it shoots. I've lowered mine to just five seconds (see the Nikon menu above). I press the shutter button and then five seconds later, the shot fires (I figure that five seconds is enough time for any movement caused by my pressing the shutter release to subside).

A Better Cable Release

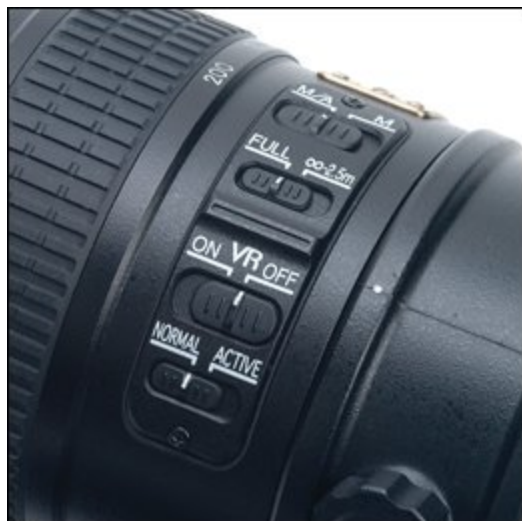
If you're thinking of getting a cable release to reduce vibration, you're better off getting an electronic cable release rather than one that actually presses the shutter button with a plunger-style wire. Because, even though it's better than you pressing the button with your big ol' stubby vibration-causing finger, it doesn't compare with an electronic (or wireless) version that doesn't touch the camera at all.

Getting Super Sharp: Mirror Lock-Up



All right, we're starting to get a bit obsessed with camera shake, but that's what this chapter is all about—removing any movement so we get nothing but the sharpest, cleanest photo possible. The next trick we're going to employ is mirror lock-up. What this essentially does is locks your camera's mirror in the up position, so when you take the shot, the mirror does not move until after the exposure is made, limiting the movement inside your camera during the exposure, and therefore giving you that much sharper a photo. How much does this matter? It's probably second only to using a solid tripod! So, you'll need to find out where the mirror lock-up control is for your camera (most of today's dSLR cameras have this feature because you also use this to clean your sensor). Once you set your camera to mirror lock-up, you now have to press the shutter release button (on your remote or cable release) twice: once to lift the mirror, and then a second time to actually take the shot. Now, this technique sounds a bit nitpicky. Does it make that big a difference? By itself, no. But add this to everything else, and it's another step toward that tack sharp nirvana.

Turn Off Vibration Reduction (or IS)



The big rage in digital lenses these days are the Vibration Reduction (VR) lens from Nikon and the Image Stabilization (IS) lens from Canon, which help you get sharper images while hand-holding your camera in low-light situations. Basically, they let you hand-hold in more low-light situations by stabilizing the movement of your lens when your shutter is open longer, and honestly, they work wonders for those instances where you can't work on a tripod (like weddings, some sporting events, when you're shooting in a city, or just places where they simply won't let you set up a tripod). If you're in one of those situations, I highly recommend these VR or IS lenses, but depending on which one you use, there are some rules about when you should turn them off. For example, we'll start with Nikon. If you are shooting on a tripod with a Nikon VR lens, to get sharper images turn the VR feature off (you do this right on the lens itself by turning the VR switch to the Off position). The non-technical explanation why is, these VR lenses look for vibration. If they don't find any, they'll go looking for it, and that looking for vibration when there is absolutely none can cause (you guessed it) some small vibration. So just follow this simple rule: When you're hand-holding, turn VR or IS on. When you're shooting on a tripod, for the sharpest images possible, turn VR or IS off. Now, there are some Nikon VR lenses and some older Canon IS lenses that can be used on a tripod with VR or IS turned on. So, be sure to check the documentation that came with your VR or IS lens to see if yours needs to be turned off.

Shoot at Your Lens' Sharpest Aperture



Another trick the pros use is, when possible, shoot at your lens' sharpest aperture. For most lenses, that is about two full stops smaller than wide open (so the f-stop number you use will go higher by two stops). For example, if you had an f/2.8 lens, the sharpest apertures for that lens would be f/5.6 and f/8 (two full stops down from 2.8). Of course, you can't always choose these apertures, but if you're in a situation where you can (and we'll talk about this later in the book), then shooting two stops down from wide open will usually give you the sharpest image your lens can deliver. Now, that being said, this isn't true for all lenses, and if that's not the case with your lens, you'll find your lens' sweet spot (its sharpest aperture) in short order if you keep an eye out for which aperture your sharpest images seem to come from. You can do that by looking at your photos' EXIF data (the background information on your shots embedded by your digital camera into the photos themselves) in Photoshop by going under Photoshop's File menu and choosing File Info. Then click on Camera Data 1. It will show the aperture your shot was taken at. If you find most of your sharpest shots are taken with a particular aperture, then you've found your sweet spot. However, don't let this override the most important reason you choose a particular aperture, and that is to give you the depth of field you need for a particular shot. But it's just nice to know which f-stop to choose when your main concern is sharpness, not controlling depth of field.

Good Glass Makes a Big Difference



Does buying a really good lens make that big a difference in sharpness? Absolutely! A few weeks back I went shooting with a friend in Zion National Park in Utah. He had just bought a brand new Canon EF 2470mm f/2.8L, which is a tack-sharp lens. It's not cheap, but like anything else in photography (and in life), the really good stuff costs more. His other lens was a fairly inexpensive telephoto zoom he had been using for a few years. Once he saw the difference in sharpness between his new, good quality lens and his cheap lens, he refused to shoot with the telephoto again. He had been shooting with it for years, and in one day, after seeing what a difference a really sharp lens made, he wouldn't shoot with his old lens again. So, if you're thinking of buying a zoom lens for \$295, sharpness clearly isn't your biggest priority. A quality lens is an investment, and as long as you take decent care of it, it will give you crystal clear photos that inexpensive lenses just can't deliver.



When talking about the quality of lenses, we don't use the word "lens." It's too obvious. Instead, we say stuff like, "Hey, Joe's got some really good glass," or, "He needs to invest in some good glass," etc. Try this the next time you're at the local camera store, and see if the guy behind the counter doesn't get that "you're in the club" twinkle in his eye.

Avoid Increasing Your ISO, Even in Dim Light



When you're shooting on a tripod in dim or low light, don't increase your ISO (your digital equivalent of film speed). Keep your ISO at the lowest ISO setting your camera allows (ISO 200, 100, or 50, if your camera's ISO goes that low, as shown on the Nikon menu above) for the sharpest, cleanest photos. Raising the ISO adds noise to your photos, and you don't want that (of course, if you're hand-holding and have no choice, like when shooting a wedding in the low lighting of a church, then increasing the ISO is a necessity, but when shooting on a tripod, avoid high ISOs like the plague you'll have cleaner, sharper images every time).



So what do you do if you can't use a tripod (i.e., the place where you're shooting won't allow tripods)? In this case, if there's plenty of light where you're shooting, you can try using very fast shutter speeds to minimize hand-held camera shake. Set your camera to shutter priority mode and choose a speed that matches or exceeds the focal length of your lens (a 180mm lens means you'll shoot at 1/200 of a second).

Zoom In to Check Sharpness



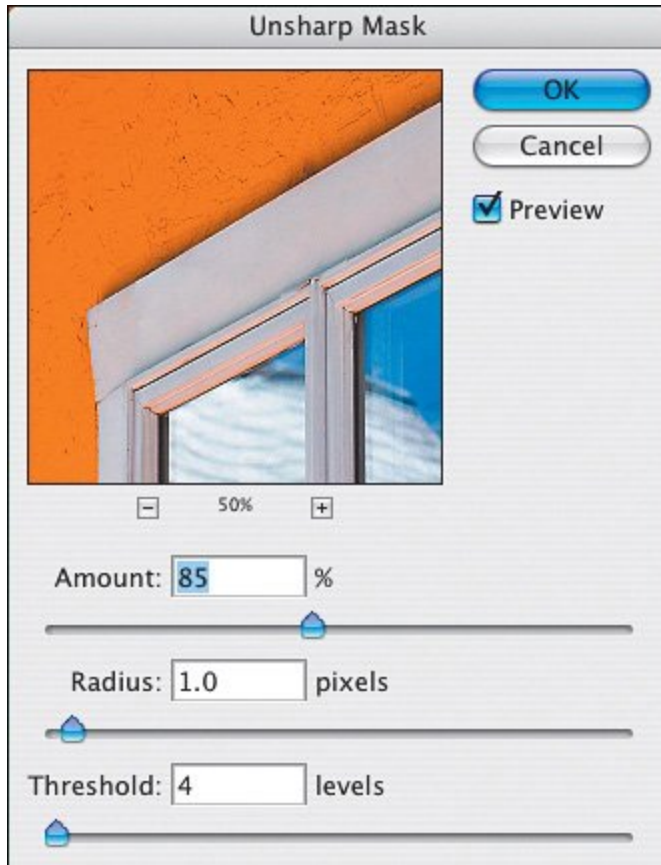
Here's a sad fact of digital photography everything looks sharp and in focus when you first look at the tiny LCD screen on the back of your digital camera. When your photo is displayed at that small size, it just about always looks sharp. However, you'll soon learn (once you open your photo on your computer) that you absolutely can't trust that tiny little screen you've got to zoom in and check the sharpness. On the back of your camera there's a zoom button that lets you zoom in close and see if the photo is really in focus. Do this right on the spot right after you take the shot, so you still have a chance to retake the photo if you zoom in and find out it's blurry. The pros always check for sharpness this way, because they've been burned one too many times.

Custom Quick Zoom Settings

Some of today's digital SLR cameras have a quick zoom option, where you can set a particular amount you want your zoom to zoom in to. Check your owner's manual to see if your digital camera has a custom quick zoom setting.

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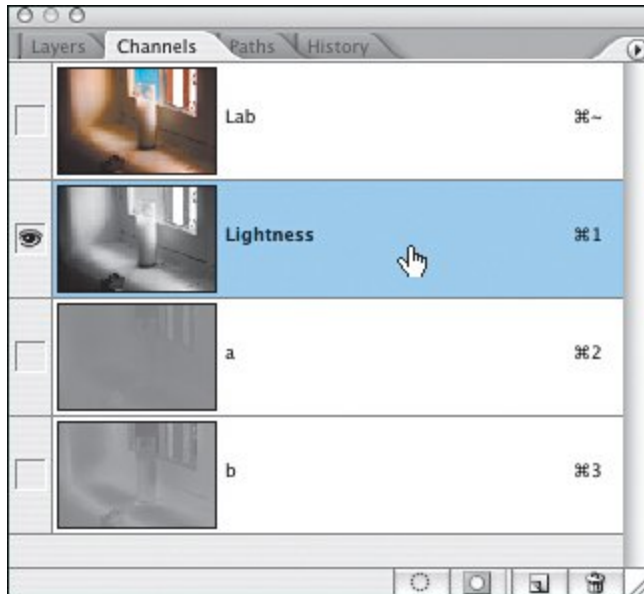
Sharpening After the Fact in Photoshop



If you've followed all the tips in this chapter thus far, and you've got some nice crisp photos, you can still make your photos look even that much sharper by adding sharpening in either Adobe Photoshop (the software darkroom tool the pros use) or Adobe Photoshop Elements (the semi-pro version). Now, which photos need to be sharpened using Photoshop? All of them. We sharpen every single photo we shoot using Photoshop's Unsharp Mask filter. Okay, it sounds like something named "unsharp" would make your photos blurry, but it doesn't—the name is a holdover from traditional darkroom techniques, so don't let that throw you. Using it is easy. Just open your photo in Photoshop, then go under Photoshop's Filter menu, under Sharpen, and choose Unsharp Mask. When the dialog appears, there are three sliders for applying different sharpening parameters, but rather than going through all that technical stuff, I'm going to give you three sets of settings that I've found work wonders.

1. For people: Amount 150%, Radius 1, Threshold 10
2. For cityscapes, urban photography, or travel: Amount 65%, Radius 3, Threshold 2
3. For general everyday use: Amount 85%, Radius 1, Threshold 4

Pro Sharpening



This particular sharpening technique can only be done in the full-blown version of Photoshop (in other words, not in Elements), because it requires access to Photoshop's Channels palette (which Elements doesn't give you). So, if you have Photoshop, this is the method most widely used by pros because it lets you sharpen more without creating nasty halos and color artifacts which might otherwise occur when you use lots of sharpening. Here's how it's done:

1. Go under the Image menu, under Mode, and choose Lab Color.
2. Go to the Channels palette and click on the Lightness channel. (*Note:* This Lightness channel contains only the detail and not the color in the photo, which is why you sidestep some of the color problems you get by sharpening the full-color photo.)
3. Now apply the Unsharp Mask filter using the settings shown on the previous page.
4. Try applying the Unsharp Mask filter again, using the same settings. If your photo appears too sharp, before you do anything else, go under the Edit menu and choose Fade Unsharp Mask. In the Fade dialog, lower the Opacity slider to 50%, so you only get half-strength on the second application of the filter.
5. Now go back under the Image menu, under Mode, and choose RGB Color.

That's it pretty easy stuff once you know the secret, eh?

Hand-Held Sharpness Trick



Anytime you're hand-holding your camera in anything but nice direct sunlight, you're taking your chances on getting a sharply focused photo because of camera shake, right? Well, the next time you're hand-holding in less than optimal light, and you're concerned that you might not get a tack-sharp image, try a trick the pros use in this sticky situation: switch to continuous shooting (burst) mode and hold down the shutter release to take a burst of photos instead of just one or two. Chances are at least one of those dozen or so photos is going to be tack sharp, and if it's an important shot, it can often save the day. I've used this on numerous occasions and it's saved my butt more than once. (Nikon's continuous shooting mode button is pictured above. See [Chapter 5](#) for more on shooting in continuous [burst] mode with both Nikon and Canon cameras.)

Getting Steadier Hand-Held Shots



SCOTT KELBY

I picked up this trick from photographer Joel Lipovetsky (pictured here) when we were out on a shoot and I saw him hand-holding his camera with his camera strap twisted into what he called "The Death Grip." It's designed to give you extra stability and sharper shots while hand-holding your camera by wrapping your camera strap around your arm (just above the elbow), then wrapping it around the outside of your wrist (as shown above) and pulling the strap pretty tight, which makes your camera more stable in your hand. You can see how it wraps in the photo above, but the pose is just for illustrative purposes you still would hold the camera up to your eye and look through the viewfinder as always. Thanks to Joel for sharing this surprisingly cool tip.

Lean on Me!

Another trick the pros use (when they're in situations where they can't use a tripod) is to either: (a) lean themselves against a wall to help keep themselves steady if they're steady then the camera's more steady, or (b) lean or lay their lens on a railing, a fence, or any other already stationary object as kind of a make-shift tripod. Keep an eye out for these tripod substitutes whenever you're without yours it can make a big difference.

Chapter Two. Shooting Flowers Like a Pro

There's More to It Than You'd Think

[\[View full size image\]](#)



4 You're probably surprised to see a chapter in here about shooting flowers because flowers seem like they'd be easy to shoot, right? I mean, they're just sitting there not moving. They're colorful. They're already interesting, and people love looking at them. It should be a total no-brainer to get a good flower shot. But ya know what? It's not. It's a brainer. It's a total brainer. Ya know why? It's because of pollination. That's right, it's the pollination that naturally occurs in nature that puts a thin reflective film over flowers that can't normally be seen with the naked eye, but today's sensitive CMOS and CCD digital camera sensors capture this reflectance and it appears as a gray tint over our images. Not only does it turn the photos somewhat gray (which causes flowers to lose much of their vibrant color), you also lose sharpness as well. Now, there is a special photographic filter (called the Flora 61B from PhotoDynamics) that can help reduce the effects of this pollination and both bring back the

sharpness and reduce the graying effect, but because of U.S. trade sanctions imposed by the Federal Trade Commission, we can no longer buy this filter direct. Especially because I totally made this whole thing up. I can't believe you fell for this two chapters in a row. Seriously, how are you going to get good flower photos if you're falling for the old Flora 61B trick? Okay, I'm just teasing you, but seriously, getting good flower shots is an art, and if you follow the tips I'm laying out in this chapter, the very next flower shots you take will be that much better (especially if you don't mind the graying and loss of sharpness caused by pollination). See, there I go again. It's a sickness.

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Don't Shoot Down on Flowers



SCOTT KELBY

On an average day, if you were to walk by some wildflowers in a field, or along a path in a garden, you'd be looking down at these flowers growing out of the ground, right? That's why, if you shoot flowers from a standing position, looking down at them like we always do, your flower shots will look very, well...average. If you want to create flower shots with some serious visual interest, you have to shoot them from an angle we don't see every day. That usually means not shooting down on them, and instead getting down low and shooting them from their level. This is another one of those things the pros routinely do and most amateurs miss. Hey, if you're going to shoot some great flower shots, you're going to have to get your hands dirty (well, at least your knees anyway). The shots above show the difference: on the left, the typical "shooting down on flowers" shot; on the right, the same flowers in the same light using the same focal length lens shot 30 seconds later, but I shot them from the side (down on one knee) instead of shooting down on them. You can see the difference shooting a non-typical angle makes. So, to get great flower shots, start by not shooting down on them. By the way, while you're down there, try getting really low (down below the flowers) and shoot up at them for a fascinating angle you rarely see!

Shooting Flowers with a Zoom Lens



SCOTT KELBY

You don't have to have a macro (close-up) lens to take great flower shots. Zoom lenses work just great for shooting flowers for two reasons: (1) you can often zoom in tight enough to have the flower nearly fill the frame, and (2) it's easy to put the background out of focus with a zoom lens, so the focus is just on the flower. Start by shooting in aperture priority mode (set your mode dial to A), then use the smallest aperture number your lens will allow (in other words, if you have an f/5.6 lens, use f/5.6). Then try to isolate one flower, or a small group of flowers that are close together, and focus on just that flower. When you do this, it puts the background out of focus, which keeps the background from distracting the eye and makes a stronger visual composition.

Save Your Knees When Shooting Flowers

If you're going to be shooting a lot of flowers, there's an inexpensive accessory that doesn't come from the camera store, but you'll want it just the same: knee pads. They will become your best friend. Find them at Home Depot, Lowe's, or any good gardening store.

Use a Macro Lens to Get Really Close



If you've ever wondered how the pros get those incredibly close-up shots (usually only seen by bees during their pollination duties), it's with a macro lens. A macro lens (just called "macro" for short) lets you get a 1:1 view of your subject and reveal flowers in a way that only macros can. A macro lens has a very shallow depth of field so much so that when photographing a rose, the petals in the front can be in focus and the petals at the back of the rose can be out of focus. I'm not talking about an arrangement of roses in a vase; I'm talking about one single rose. By the way, you *must* (see how that's set off in italics?), must, must shoot macro on a tripod. When you're really in tight on a flower, any tiny bit of movement will ruin your photo, so use every sharpening technique in [Chapter 1](#) to capture this amazing new world of macro flower photography.

Turn Your Zoom Lens into a Macro Zoom

It's easy; just add a close-up lens (like we talk about on the next page) onto your regular zoom lens. As I mention, these close-up lenses (also called two-element close-up diopters) are cheaper than buying a full-blown macro lens, plus adding it to your zoom gives you zoom capability, as well. You can buy single-element close-up filters, but they're generally not as sharp at the edges, but for flowers the edges usually aren't as important anyway.

Can't Afford a Macro? How 'bout a Close-Up?



I learned about this from my buddy (and famous wildlife and nature photographer) Moose Peterson, and what it lets you do is turn your telephoto zoom lens into a macro lens for 1/4 of the price, and 1/10 the weight and size. It looks just like a thick filter (it's about 1" thick), and it screws onto both Canon and Nikon lenses just like a traditional filter, but it turns your zoom lens into a macro zoom. What's great about this little close-up lens is that:

1. it takes up so little room in your camera bag;
2. it weighs just a few ounces;
3. and best of all it's pretty inexpensive (well, compared to buying a decent macro lens, which would run you at least \$500).

It's called the Canon Close-Up Lens (even though it's from Canon, you can get a version that screws onto a Nikon lens. It's the only thing I know of from Canon that's designed for Nikon cameras. I use the Canon Close-Up Lens 500D to attach to my 70200mm Nikon VR lens [it's 77mm], and it works wonders). So, how much is this little wizard? Depending on the size of the lens you're going to attach it to, they run anywhere from about \$70 to \$139. That ain't bad!

When to Shoot Flowers



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ANDREI BOTEZATU

There are three ideal times to shoot flowers:

1. On cloudy, overcast days. The shadows are soft as the sun is hidden behind the clouds, and the rich colors of the flowers aren't washed out by the harsh direct rays of the sun. That's why overcast days are a flower photographer's best friend. In fact, there's probably only one other time that's better than shooting on an overcast day, and that is...
2. Just after a rain. This is a magical time to shoot flowers. Shoot while the sky is still overcast and the raindrops are still on the petals (but of course, to protect your digital camera [and yourself], don't actually shoot in the rain). If you've got a macro lens, this is an amazing time to use it. While you're shooting macro, don't forget to shoot the raindrops on leaves and stems as well, while they're reflecting the colors of the flowers (of course, don't forget to shoot on a tripod if you're shooting macro).
3. If you shoot on sunny days, try to shoot in the morning and late afternoon. To make the most of this light, shoot with a long zoom lens and position yourself so the flowers are backlit, and you'll get some spectacular (but controlled) back lighting.

Don't Wait for RainFake it!



SCOTT KELBY

This one may sound cheesy at first, but you'll be shocked at how well this works. Instead of waiting for a rainy day to shoot, take a little spray bottle with you, fill it with water, and spray the flowers with water yourself. I found a nice little spray bottle in Walgreens' beauty section (I know what you're thinking, "Walgreens has a beauty section?" Believe it or not, they do) for a couple of bucks, and it works wonders. Just a couple of quick spritzes with the spray bottle and you've got some lovely drops of water on your petals, and no one will ever know you didn't wait patiently for Mother Nature to intervene. Get a small enough bottle and you can carry it in your camera bag (empty, of course). By the way, I've used this spray bottle technique to shoot some yellow roses I bought for my wife, and by using a macro lens you'd swear I was shooting on the White House lawn after a spring shower. Try this once you'll become a believer.

Tip That Doesn't Belong in This Book

There's another hidden benefit of carrying a small spray bottle in your camera bag: getting wrinkles out of clothes. Just give your shirt, sport coat, photographer's vest, etc., a couple of spritzes before bed and when you wake up in the morning, the wrinkles are gone. I know, this has little to do with photography, but I had this empty space at the bottom here, so I figured I'd pass this on.

Flowers on a Black Background



SCOTT KELBY

One of the most dramatic compositions for shooting flowers is to position a single flower on a black background. You can add a black background in Photoshop, but in most cases that is just way too much work. Instead, do what the pros do: put a black background behind your flower when you shoot it. My buddy Vincent Versace, one of the leading nature photographers (and instructors) in the business, told me his trick: he wears a black jacket while out shooting flowers, and if he sees a flower he wants on a black background, he has his assistant (or a friend, or his wife, or a passerby, etc.) hold the back of his jacket behind the flower. I know, it sounds crazy until you try it yourself. If you're shooting flowers indoors (I shoot nearly every arrangement I buy for my wife, or that we receive from friends), buy a yard of either black velvet or black velour (velvet runs around \$1015 per yard; velour runs around \$510 per yard) and literally put it behind your flowers. You can prop it up on just about anything (I hate to admit it, but I've even propped up my velour background by draping it over a box of my son's Cookie Crisp cereal). Leave a few feet between your flowers and the black background (so the light falls off and the black looks really black) and then shoot away. Now, what kind of light works best? Keep reading to find out.

Shooting on a White Background



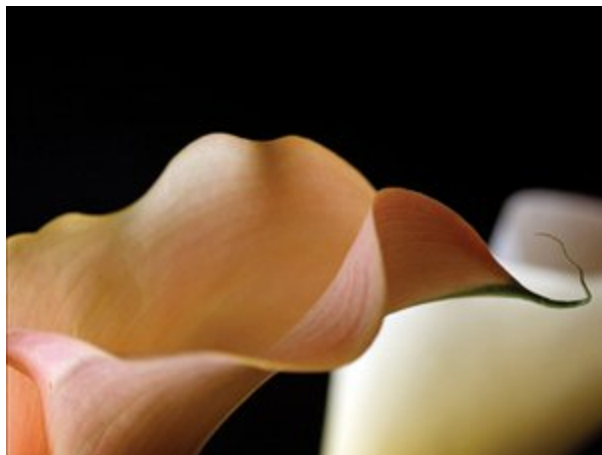
SCOTT KELBY

Another popular look for a flower photographer is to shoot on a white background. You could buy a seamless roll of paper from your local camera store (it's pretty cheap), but it's usually much wider than you need. Plus, unless you're shooting flowers for a florist, you're usually not going to want to see the vase. That's why I go to Office Depot and buy two or three 20x30" sheets of white mounting board (it looks like poster board, but it's much thicker and stiffer). I usually position one behind the flowers (in a vase), and then use the other to reflect natural light (from a window with indirect sunlight) back onto the white background so it doesn't look gray. Again, put about 3 feet between your flowers and the background, and use that natural light to capture your flowers on what appears to be a solid white background you added in Photoshop, but it was even easier because you did it in the camera.

Put That Shower Curtain to Work

If you buy the white shower curtain mentioned in the tip on the next page, here's another way to stretch your shopping dollar use it as your white background. As long as you're using a shallow depth of field, you'll never know that white background is a shower curtain. Just don't shoot at f/11 or f/16 or people will say things like, "Hey, nice shower curtain," or, "Did you shoot that in the bathroom?"

The Perfect Light for Indoor Flower Shots



SCOTT KELBY

If you're shooting flowers indoors, you don't have to buy an expensive lighting rig (finally, something you don't have to spend a bunch of money on), because flowers love diffused natural light. By diffused, I mean that it's not getting direct sunlight, so any soft light coming in from a window works just great. If your window is really, really dirty, that's even better because it makes the light even more diffuse. So look for a window in your house, studio, office, etc., that has non-direct sunlight coming in. Then set your flowers near that window, and position them so you're getting side lighting (if the natural light hits the flowers head on, they'll look kind of flat; you need that extra dimension that side lighting brings). Now set up your tripod so you're shooting the flowers at eye level (remember, don't shoot down on flowers). Now you're ready to shoot in some beautiful, soft light, and you didn't spend a dime (at least on lighting, anyway).

How to Create the Perfect Natural Light by Cheating

If you're faced with nothing but harsh direct sunlight through your open window, you can cheat—just go to Wal-Mart, Kmart, or Target and buy two things: (1) a frosted white shower curtain (or shower curtain liner), and (2) some tacks or push pins. Go back to your harsh light window, tack up your frosted shower curtain, and enjoy the best diffused natural light you've seen. Don't worry! I won't tell anybody.

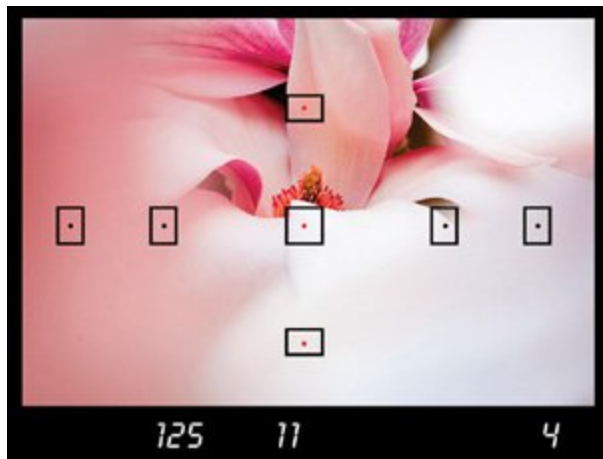
Where to Get Great Flowers to Shoot



©ISTOCKPHOTO/CHRIS BENCE

This may sound like the "Duh" tip of the book, but I can't tell you how many times I've told a photographer about this and they say, "Gee, I never thought of that." To get some really great flowers to shoot, just go to a local florist and buy them (see, there's that "duh" part). You can pick exactly which individual flowers you want (I like shooting roses, calla lilies, and daisies myself), and chances are the flowers you're getting are in great shape (they're fresh). You can reject any flower they pull out that has brown spots or is misshapen (I love that word, "misshapen"), and you don't have to pay to have them arranged. You can often walk out for less than 10 bucks with some amazing-looking subjects to shoot at the height of their freshness (though sometimes you have to wait a day or so until your roses are in full bloom).

Stopping the Wind



SCOTT KELBY

If you're shooting flowers outdoors, you're bound to run into the natural enemy of flower photography: wind. There's nothing more frustrating than standing there, tripod set, camera aimed and focused, and you're waiting for the wind to die down enough to get the shot. This is especially bad if you're shooting macro, where the slightest movement spells disaster (well, not disaster, but a really blurry photo). You can try the old use-your-body-to-block-the-wind trick (which rarely works by the way), but you're actually better off letting the camera fix the problem. Switch to shutter priority mode (where you control the shutter speed and your camera takes care of adjusting the rest to give you a proper exposure), then increase the shutter speed to at least 1/250 of a second or higher. This will generally freeze the motion caused by wind (unless it's hurricane season). If the higher shutter speed doesn't do the trick, then you have to go to Plan B, which is making the wind the subject. That's right, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em: use a very slow shutter speed so you see the movement of the flowers (you'll actually see trails as the flower moves while your shutter is open), and in effect you'll "see" the wind, creating an entirely different look. Give this seeing-the-wind trick a try, and you might be surprised how many times you'll be hoping the wind picks up after you've got your regular close-ups already done.

Chapter Three. Shooting Weddings Like a Pro

There Is No Retaking Wedding Photos. It's Got to Be Right the First Time!

[\[View full size image\]](#)



If you're living your life and you think to yourself, "Ya know, I've got it pretty easy," then it's time to shoot a wedding. Don't worry this isn't something you're going to have to go looking for if you've got even one long lens (200mm or longer), it will find you. That's because in a lot of people's minds, if you have a long lens, you're a serious photographer. It's true. Seriously, try this: show up at an event with a 200mm to 400mm lens on your camera and people will literally get out of your way. They assume you've been hired by the event and that you're on official photography business, and they will stand aside to let you shoot. It's the equivalent of walking into a factory with a clipboard people assume you're legit and they let you go about your business. Add a photographer's vest and it's like having an official press pass to anything (try this one you'll be amazed). Anyway, if you have a long lens, before long someone you know will get married but they won't have a budget for a

professional photographer (like your cousin Earl). He'll ask, "Can you shoot our wedding photos?" Of course, you're a nice person and you say, "Why sure." Big mistake. You're going to work your butt off, miss all the food, drinks, and fun, and you'll experience stress at a level only NORAD radar operators monitoring North Korea ever achieve. A wedding ceremony happens once in real time. There are no second takes, no room for mess-ups, no excuses. Don't make Earl's bride really madread this chapter first.

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The Trick for Low-Light Shooting in a Church



Although you usually should use a tripod when shooting the formals (the group shots after the ceremony with the bride, groom, family members, etc.), when shooting the wedding ceremony in a low-light situation like a church, you'll often need to hand-hold your shots. This is a problem because hand-holding in low-light situations is almost a guarantee of having blurry photos (because of the slow shutter speeds of low-light situations). So, how do the pros get those crisp low-light shots in a setting like a church? Two things: (1) they increase their digital camera's ISO (the digital film speed). Today's digital SLR cameras (in particular, the Nikons and Canons) let you shoot at very high ISOs with little visible noise. So how high can you go? At least ISO 800 (see Canon LCD panel above), but you can usually get away with as high as ISO 1600 in most situations. This lets you get away with hand-holding in the low light of a church, while avoiding the camera shake you'd get at ISO 100 or 200. (2) They shoot with their fastest lens (your lens with the largest available f-stop, like f/1.4, f/2.8, or f/3.5), which lets in more available light, allowing you to shoot in lower light without blurring your images.

Way Cool Tip

If you're shooting in very high ISOs, you'll want to know about a popular Photoshop plug-in for wedding photographers called Noise Ninja (from PictureCode.com). Besides reducing noise, a happy side effect is that it also smoothes skin.

Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 1



If you're shooting your weddings with a flash indoors, you're likely to get harsh shadows and unflattering, flat light, but it doesn't have to be that way. The trick for getting soft, diffused light from your built-in flash without those harsh, hard shadows is to get a flash diffuser (a translucent sheet that fits over your flash to make the light softer and diffused). If you have a built-in pop-up flash on your digital camera, you can use something like LumiQuest's Soft Screen Diffuser (which runs around \$13), or if you have an external flash unit, take a look at Gary Fong's Lightsphere-II, which sells for around \$48, attaches over your flash unit, and does a great job of softening the light and dispersing it evenly. This will make a big difference in the quality of the light that falls on your bride, groom, and bridal party, and you'll get much more professional results for a very small investment.

Getting Soft, Diffused Light with Flash, Part 2



The other method of getting soft, diffused, and better yet, directional light using a flash (the key word here is directional, because it keeps your flash shots from looking flat) works if you're using an external flash unit (and not the built-in flash on your camera, which is pretty limited, as you'll soon see). The advantage of an external flash unit is that you can change the angle and direction of the flash. The reason this is cool is that instead of aiming your flash right into your subject's face (which gives the most harsh, flat light you can imagine), you can bounce the light off one of two places: (1) the ceiling. If the room you're shooting in has a white ceiling (and chances are the ceiling is white), then you can aim your flash head up at the ceiling at a 45° angle (as shown above, and provided that the ceiling isn't more than 10 feet tall) and the ceiling will absorb the harsh light, and what will fall on your subject is much softer, smoother light and, best of all, it won't cast hard shadows behind your subject. Instead, your soft shadows will cast on the ground (and out of your frame). Now, want to take this up another notch? Then instead of aiming at the ceiling, (2) have an assistant (a friend, relative, etc.) hold a reflector on your left or right side, slightly above shoulder height, then angle your flash head into that. So now, the reflector eats up the harsh light, but better yet, since the reflector is at an angle, it casts soft directional light on an angle, too. This puts soft shadows on one side of the bride's (groom's, bridesmaid's, etc.) face, giving a more pleasing and less flat lighting effect (think of it as side lighting).

Use Your Flash at Outdoor Weddings



MATT KLOSKOWSKI

One trick that wedding photographers have been using for years is to use fill flash outdoors on sunny days. I know, it sounds crazy to use a flash when the sun is bright in the sky, but wedding photographers add flash to these daylight shots to help eliminate those hard, harsh shadows in their subjects' faces, and make the bride and groom look more natural under these undesirable lighting conditions (plus it will usually add nice catchlights in the eyes of your subjects, as well). Make sure you check the results in your LCD monitor to make sure your light is properly balanced. Here's a shot of me taken while shooting a recent wedding. Notice the flash doesn't fire straight into the wedding party's faces. Instead, the head is rotated to the right (or left) and tilted 45°, so the flash fills in the shadows yet doesn't have that harsh look you'd get by aiming the flash straight at your subjects. As long as you're not more than 8 or 10 feet away from your subject, don't worry the flash will still be effective, even though it's not aiming straight on.

Another Cool Flash Tip

Here's another tip that will make your flash seem less "flashy" when shooting outdoors: use your camera's flash exposure compensation button and change the flash exposure compensation to 1 (it works the same way regular exposure compensation works, but for flash exposures). Your flash will still help lift out the shadows, but now without being so obvious.

Keep Backup Memory Cards on You



It's not unusual for a pro wedding photographer to shoot 750 shots in one wedding, covering the four major parts of a wedding (the pre-wedding shots, the ceremony, the formals, and the reception), so it's likely you'll be shooting a similar amount (maybe less, maybe more, but it will be literally hundreds of shots). The last thing you want to happen is to run out of film (in other words you don't want to fill up your digital camera's memory card unless you have an empty backup card ready to step right in so you can keep shooting). The trick here is to keep a spare backup memory card physically on you at all times. Keep one right there in your pocket (or purse) so the moment your card reads full, you're just seconds away from continuing your shoot. It's a natural law of wedding photography that your memory card will become full at the most crucial moment of the ceremony, and if you have to stop to go find your backup card (in your camera bag across the room, in the car, or in the reception hall), you're going to miss the most important shot of the day (I learned this the hard way). So always keep a backup physically on you, so you're only 10 seconds away from shooting again.

Formals: Who to Shoot First



©ISTOCKPHOTO

After the ceremony, in most cases you'll shoot the formal portraits of the bride and groom posed with everyone from bridesmaids to grandparents. The hard part is rounding up all the people you'll need to shoot with the bride and groom at the exact time you need them. This can take 30 minutes or three hours—it's up to you and how organized you are. Here's a tip to make things move as quickly as possible: gather everyone that will appear in any shot together right from the start. While they're all sitting there, shoot the formal bride and groom portraits first (you'll see why in just a moment). Once you've got those out of the way, shoot the largest groups of people (the huge family portraits), and then once you're done with a group (like the grandparents for example), send them off to the reception. So, in short start with everyone, and then as you shoot them, release them to go to the reception until you're left with just the bride and groom again. If you don't do it this way, you'll wind up standing around for long periods of time waiting for Uncle Arnie, who's somewhere in the reception hall. The reason you shoot the bride and groom first is that the pressure to get the bride and groom to the reception hall increases exponentially as time goes by, because generally they hold the meal until the bride and groom have arrived. So, everyone is sitting in the reception hall waiting on you the photographer. You then wind up rushing the most important portraits of them all (the ones the couple will actually buy their formal portraits). Make your life easy: start big, then get small.

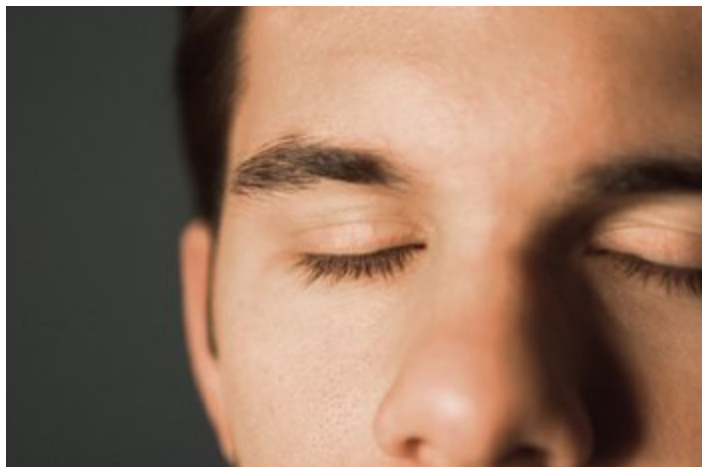
Formals: Where to Aim



©ISTOCKPHOTO/KEVIN RUSS

When shooting large groups for the formal portraits, you'll want to make sure that you use an aperture setting that keeps everyone in focus. Try $f/11$ for a reasonable depth of field for groups. Now, where do you focus? If you have more than one row of people deep, the old rule (which still stands true today) is to focus on the eyes of the people in the front row. You have more depth behind than in front, so make sure you focus on them, and the rest should be okay, but if that front row is out of focus, the whole shot is a bust.

The Trick to Keeping Them from Blinking



©ISTOCKPHOTO/NICK SCHLAX

If you shoot a group of five people or more, it's almost guaranteed that one or more people will have their eyes shut. It's another natural law of wedding photography, but you're not going to have to worry about that very much, because you're about to learn a great trick that will eliminate most, if not all, instances of people blinking or having their eyes closed. When you're ready to shoot the shot, have everybody close their eyes, and then on the count of three have them all open their eyes and smile. Then, wait one more count before you take your shot. When I'm shooting these groups, here's what I say, "Okay, everybody close your eyes. Now open them on 3-2-1...open!" Then I wait one count after they open their eyes before I take the shot. It works wonders.

Reception Photos: Making Them Dance



SCOTT KELBY

There's a problem with taking photos of people dancing. If you shoot them with a flash (and most likely you will), it will freeze their movement, so they'll look like they're just standing still, but in somewhat awkward poses. It still amazes me how people doing a line dance can be pictured as people in a police lineup—the camera just doesn't capture motion unless you tell it to. There are really two techniques: the first is in the camera. It's called panning, where you take the camera and follow the movement of one of the people dancing (usually the bride, groom, a bridesmaid, or a groomsman), while using a slow shutter speed so the rest of the people have a motion blur, which makes them look like (you guessed it) they're dancing. If you didn't remember to employ this technique during your reception shoot, then you can add this motion blur in Photoshop. The first step is to duplicate the Background layer. Then go under the Filter menu, under Blur, and choose Motion Blur. Set the Angle to 0°, then increase the Distance until things look like they're really moving. The last step is to get the Eraser tool, choose a really big soft-edged brush (like the soft round 200-pixel brush) and erase over the person you're focusing on (like the bride, etc.) so that person appears in focus, while everyone else is dancing and moving around having a good time.

Your Main Job: Follow the Bride



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ELIANET ORTIZ

The main focus at any wedding is the bride, so make darn sure your main focus at the pre-wedding, the ceremony, the formals, and the reception is the bride. Follow the bride just like you would follow the quarterback if you were shooting a football game. Especially if you're going to be selling these photos as it will be the bride (either directly or indirectly) that will be buying the prints. So make darn sure that she's the clear star of the show (photos of Uncle Arnie at the reception don't sell well, if you get my drift).

Formals: How High to Position Your Camera



©ISTOCKPHOTO/DAMIR SPANIC

When you're shooting your formal shots, the height that you position the camera is actually very important, because if it's not positioned correctly, your subject's body can look distorted or some parts can look larger than normal (in general, this is just not good stuff). So, finding the right height for professional portraits is critical. Here are a few guidelines to help you get the pro look:

Standing, Full-Length Portrait: Position your camera (on your tripod) at the bride's waist height (yes, you'll have to squat down/bend over, etc., but the final result will be worth it). Keep your lens straight (don't aim up towards the bride's face).

7/8 Shots (from the Calf Up): Position your camera (on your tripod) at the bride's chest level and shoot with your lens straight from there.

Head and Shoulders Shots: Position your camera (on your tripod) either at the bride's eye level or slightly above.

Formals: Don't Cut Off Joints



©ISTOCKPHOTO

When you're framing your formals in your viewfinder, for a more professional look, be careful not to cut off anyone at the joints (in other words, don't let the bottom of the frame cut anyone off at the elbow or knee. On the side of the frame, don't cut anyone off at the wrist or elbow either). Basically, stay away from the joints. If you have to crop an arm or leg off, try to do it as close to the middle of the arm or leg as possible, staying clear of the joints. 'Nuf said.

Formals: Build Off the Bride and Groom



©ISTOCKPHOTO/KEVIN RUSS

There's a popular format for creating all your formalshave the bride and groom in the center, and have them stay put. They don't moveinstead you have groups of other people (bridesmaids, groomsmen, the best man, maid of honor, parents, grandparents, etc.) move in and out around them. Use the bride and groom as building blocks and everything will be much easier (well, as far as posing your large groups goes anyway).

Formals: The Trick to Great Backgrounds



©ISTOCKPHOTO/PHIL DATE

In formal portraits, the backgrounds are just that—backgrounds. And the key to a great background is using a very simple one. The simpler, the better. So don't look for an outdoor shot with a waterfall, 36 different kinds of plant life, and flowers blossoming from hanging vines, etc. Look for simplicity or it will greatly distract from your portraits, and give your formals an uncomfortable look (yet nobody will know why). Plus, if for any reason you have to retouch the background later in Photoshop, the less busy the background, the easier your retouch will be.

Background Tip

Here's another good tip: vary your background for your formals. It may not seem like a big deal at the time, but when you see the same background over and over and over again in the final wedding album, it can become really tedious. Once you've shot a few sets on one background, if there's another simple background nearby, try it in order to keep the album from looking like a cookie cutter.

Shooting the Details (& Which Ones to Shoot)



SCOTT KELBY

The photojournalism style of wedding photography is very big right now (where you tell the story of the wedding in photos as if you were covering it for a newspaper or magazine). One of the cornerstone elements of this technique is to make sure to photographically capture the tiny details of the wedding, especially behind the scenes before the wedding. Here's a list of things you might want to capture (shoot), which can either stand alone in the wedding album or be used as backgrounds for other photos:

- The bride's shoes
- The bride's dress hanging on a hanger
- The bride's tiara, necklace, etc.
- The wedding invitation
- The sheet music played at the wedding
- The guestbook (once a few people have signed it)
- Their champagne glasses
- Name cards at the reception
- Their wedding rings (perhaps posed on the invitation with some rose petals casually placed nearby)
- The airline tickets for their honeymoon
- The sheet music, or CD jewel case, to the music for their first dance
- The groom's boutonniere
- The bride's bouquet
-

- Any fine detail in her dress

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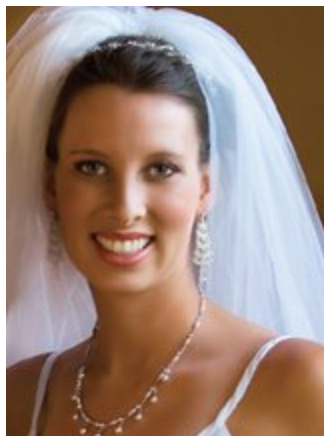
Change Your Vantage Point to Add Interest



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ROBERT DEAL

Want to create a shot everyone will remember? Shoot it from a high vantage point (look for a second story window you can shoot down from, or a balcony on the second floor, a bridge, etc.). If you can't find an existing high vantage point, then you can always create your own by bringing (or borrowing) a ladder to shoot from. Of course, be careful, because being on a ladder with expensive camera equipment is the stuff Hollywood comedies are made of. This high vantage point trick is ideal for shooting bridesmaids, groomsmen, and even the bride and groom, as shown here.

Finding That Perfect Bridal Light



SCOTT KELBY

At most weddings there is a spot with really spectacular light just waiting for you to walk over and find it, but once you find it, you have to know how to use it. That light, of course, is natural light coming in through a window (it's hard to make a photo look bad in that light). Look for a window that doesn't have direct sunlight (a window facing north usually works well to provide some soft, diffused light). So, once you find this wonderful natural side light coming in from a window, where do you place the bride? Ideally, about 6 to 8 feet from the window, so the light falls evenly and softly upon her (almost sounds like a song, doesn't it?). This is a great spot for shooting some pre-wedding shots of the bride alone, the bride with her mother, and the bride with her father.

How to Pose the Bride with Other People



SCOTT KELBY

When you're posing other people with the bride, including the groom, to create the level of closeness you'll want in your photos, be sure to position the heads of the bride and the other person very close to each other. This doesn't sound like it would be a problem, until you actually start posing people. When they fall into what feels like a natural pose, they leave way too much room between their head and the bride's head. While this may look perfectly natural in person, the photos will lack a closeness that will be really obvious. I've seen this again and again, and I constantly have to remind people, even the groom, to move their head in very close to the bride. To them, it just feels unnatural being that close while posing, but if they don't do it, your shots will look stiff and unnatural. Keep an eye out for this on your next wedding shoot and you'll be amazed at how the level of closeness between your subjects goes up, giving you much more powerful images.

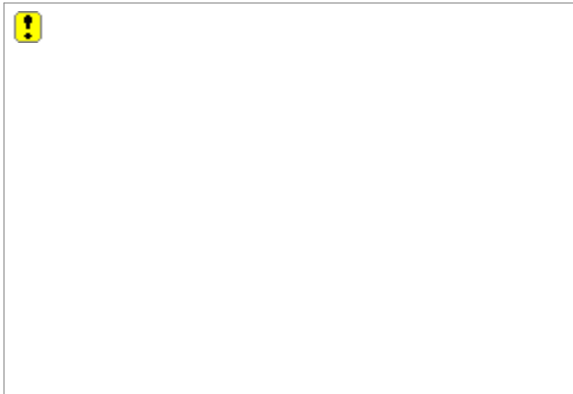
What to Shoot with a Wide-Angle Lens



©ISTOCKPHOTO/KEVIN RUSS

At weddings, there are three things you're definitely going to want to shoot with a wide-angle lens. One is the rice throwing (of course, they don't actually throw rice anymore). You'll want to shoot this with a wide-angle lens so you get the bride, groom, and just as important the crowd throwing the rice (or rice byproduct) behind and around them. The other thing you'll want a wide-angle lens for is shooting the interior of the church. The bride is going to expect a photo that takes it all in and your wide-angle lens will be your Get Out of Jail Free card when it comes to covering this all-important shot. Lastly, you'll want your wide-angle lens for shooting the bouquet toss and garter toss, so you can get both the tosser and the anxious crowd waiting to capture the prize (so to speak). Go wide, shoot from in front of the bride, and you'll get it all in one shot (but don't just take one shot this is where a burst of shots will pay off).

Back Up Your Photos Onsite



A wedding happens once. You don't get a redo, so make sure that backing up your photos on location is a part of your workflow. If you fill a memory card, and pop in a new one, the next thing you should be doing is backing up that full card to a hard drive. I recommend either the Epson P-2000 or P-4000 (shown above), both of which enable you to pop a CompactFlash card directly into the unit and back up your photos onto it without having a computer nearby. I keep a P-2000 in my camera bag, and as soon as I fill a card, I pop it into the P-2000 and hit the copy button. In just a few minutes, my memory card (with those irreplaceable photos) is backed up. Also, as soon as I return to my studio, I immediately copy all the photos onto a removable hard drive, so now I have two backups of the wedding photos. This backing up is so important without a backup, you're placing a lot of faith in those memory cards. Imagine how you'd feel having to tell a bride and groom that your memory card somehow became corrupted and you lost the shots of their ceremony. You can sidestep that crisis by making one or two simple backups.

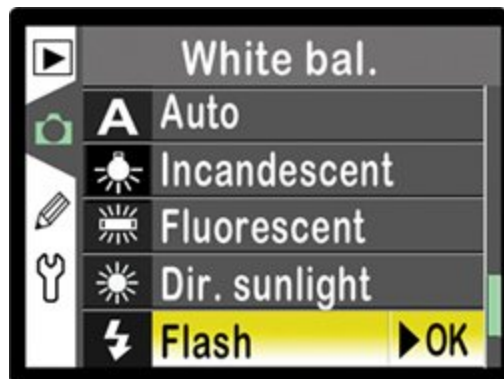
Scott's Gear Finder



The Epson P-2000 (40-GB hard drive) sells for around \$499.

The Epson P-4000 (80-GB hard drive) sells for around \$660.

If Shooting JPEGs, Use a Preset White Balance

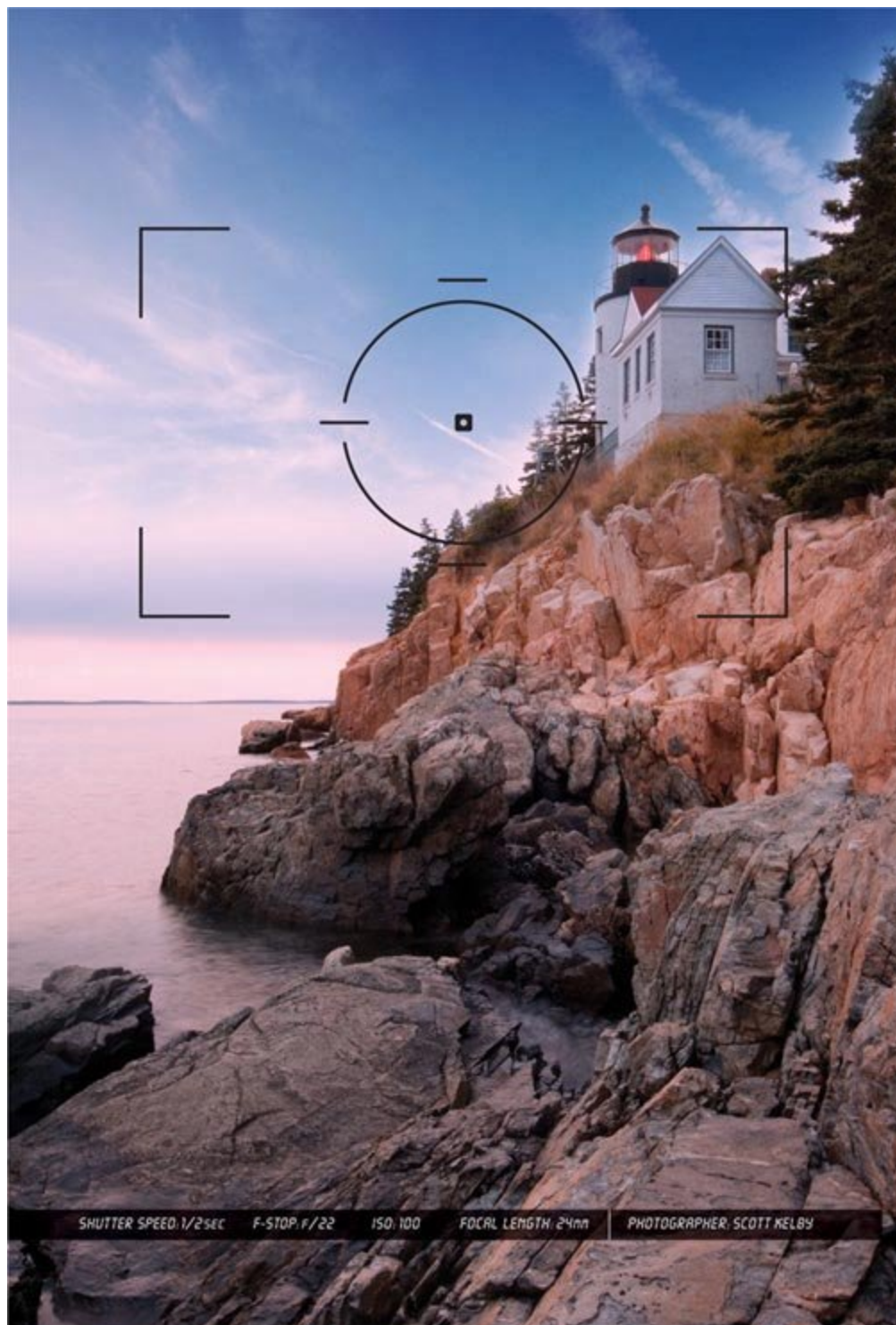


If you're shooting with your digital camera set to RAW format, you don't need to worry about the white balance (leave it set at Auto White Balance, you can always change it later, in Photoshop), but if you're like many pro wedding photographers, you're shooting in JPEG Fine format (so you can take more shots and write to the memory card faster). If that's the case, then you're better off choosing a preset white balance in the camera that matches the lighting situation you're shooting in (that way, the overall color of your photo looks balanced for the light). If you don't set the right white balance, your photos can look too yellow or too blue. Luckily, choosing a white balance is easier than you'd think, and it will save you loads of time later when you're processing your photos in Photoshop. Just go to the menu on your digital camera, scroll to the white balance control and choose Incandescent if you're shooting in a standard reception hall, or Daylight if you're shooting an outdoor wedding. If you're using a flash, set your white balance to Flash. It's that easy to get your color in line.

Chapter Four. Shooting Landscapes Like a Pro

Pro Tips for Capturing the Wonder of Nature

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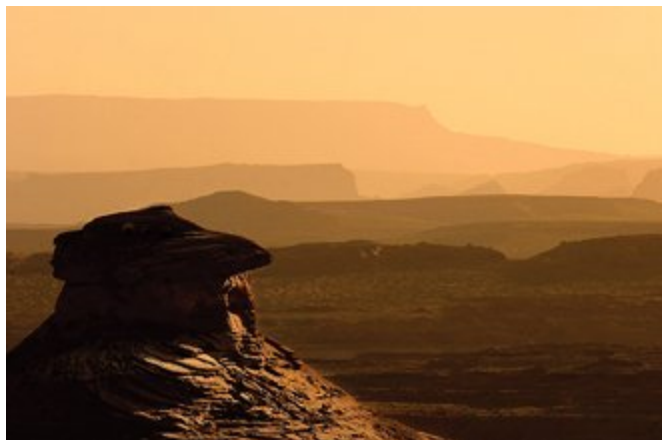
If you ever get to shoot in some truly amazing outdoor locations, like the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park, it's really a very humbling photographic experience. The reason why is you're looking at this amazing vista, at the sheer grandeur of it all, and it looks so awe inspiring you'd figure a chimp could even take a great photo of it. I mean, it's just so spectacular, how could you mess it up? Then you set up your tripod, look in your viewfinder, and it happens you begin to silently sob. You're sobbing because you bought all this expensive camera gear, with multiple camera bodies and lenses that cost more than a Toyota Prius hybrid, you've got more filters than a Ritz Camera store, and your camera bag weighs approximately 54 lbs. You saved all year, took your two-week vacation from work, bought round-trip airfare, and rented a huge SUV big enough to haul you, your family, and all your expensive gear out into the sweltering summer heat of the canyon. Now you're looking

through your viewfinder and what you see doesn't look half as good as the stinkin' postcards in the park's gift shop that sell for \$1.25 each. Tears begin to stream down your face as you realize that you're not going to get the shot you came for. And whose fault is all this? Ansel Adams that's who. He screwed up the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and a dozen other locations for us all. But even though we're not Ansel Adams, we can surely get better photos than the ones in the gift shop, right? Well, it starts with reading this chapter. Hey, it's a start.

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The Golden Rule of Landscape Photography



SCOTT KELBY

There's a golden rule of landscape photography, and you can follow every tip in this chapter, but without *strictly* following this rule, you'll never get the results the top pros do. As a landscape photographer, you can only shoot two times a day: (1) dawn. You can shoot about 15 to 30 minutes before sunrise, and then from 30 minutes to an hour (depending on how harsh the light becomes) afterward. The only other time you can shoot is: (2) dusk. You can shoot from 15 to 30 minutes before sunset, and up to 30 minutes afterward. Why only these two times? Because that's the rule. Okay, there's more to it than that. These are the only times of day when you get the soft, warm light and soft shadows that give professional quality lighting for landscapes. How stringent is this rule? I'll never forget the time I was doing a Q&A session for professional photographers. The other instructor was legendary *National Geographic* photographer Joe McNally. A man in the crowd asked Joe, "Can you really only shoot at dawn and dusk?" Joe quietly took his tripod and beat that man to death. Okay, that's an exaggeration, but what Joe said has always stuck with me. He said that today's photo editors (at the big magazines) feel so strongly about this that they won't even consider looking at any of his, or any other photographer's, landscape work if it's not shot at dawn or dusk. He also said that if he takes them a shot and says, "Look, it wasn't taken during those magic hours, but the shot is amazing," they'll still refuse to even look at it. The point is, professional landscape photographers shoot at those two times of day, and only those two times. If you want pro results, those are the only times you'll be shooting, too.

Become Married to Your Tripod



BILL FORTNEY

Okay, so now you know that as a pro landscape shooter your life is going to be like this: you get up before dawn, and you miss dinner about every evening (remember, there's no shame in coming to dinner late). If you're okay with all that, then it's time to tell you the other harsh reality since you'll be shooting in low light all the time, you'll be shooting on a tripod all the time. Every time. Always. There is no hand-holding in the professional landscape photography world. Now, I must warn you, you will sometimes find landscape photographers out there at dawn some mornings shooting the same thing you are, and they're hand-holding their cameras. They don't know it yet, but once they open their photos in Photoshop, they are going to have the blurriest, best-lit, out-of-focus shots you've ever seen. Now, what can you do to help these poor hapless souls? Quietly, take your tripod and beat them to death. Hey, it's what Joe McNally would do. (Kidding. Kind of.)

Tripods: The Carbon Fiber Advantage

The hottest thing right now in tripods is carbon fiber. Tripods made with carbon fiber have two distinct advantages: (1) they're much lighter in weight than conventional metal tripods without giving up any strength or stability, and (2) carbon fiber doesn't resonate like metal, so you have less chance of vibration. However, there's a downside: as you might expect, they're not cheap.

Shoot in Aperture Priority Mode

Nikon



Canon



The shooting mode of pro outdoor photographers is aperture priority mode (that's the little A or Av on your digital camera's mode dial). The reason why this mode is so popular is that it lets you decide how to creatively present the photo. Here's what I mean: Let's say you're shooting a tiger with a telephoto zoom lens and you decide you want the tiger (who's in the foreground of the shot) to be in focus, but you want the background out of focus. With aperture priority mode, it's easy to set your aperture to the smallest number your lens will allow (for example, f/2.8, f/4, f/5.6, etc.) and then focus on the tiger. That's it. The camera (and the telephoto lens) does the rest; you get a sharp photo of the tiger and the background is totally out of focus. So, you just learned one of the three aperture tricks: slow numbers (and a zoom lens) leave your subject in the foreground in focus, while the background goes out of focus. Now, what do you do if you want the tiger and the background to both be in focus (you want to see the tiger and his surroundings clearly)? You can move your aperture to either f/8 or f/11. These two settings work great when you just want to capture the scene as your eye sees it (without the creative touch of putting the background majorly out of focus). Far away backgrounds (way behind the tiger) will be a little bit out of focus, but not much. That's the second trick of aperture priority mode. The third trick is which aperture to use when you want as much as possible in focus (the foreground, the middle, the background everything): just choose the highest number your lens will allow (f/22, f/36, etc.).

Composing Great Landscapes



SCOTT KELBY

The next time you pick up a great travel magazine that features landscape photography or look at some of the work from the masters in digital landscape photography, like David Muench, Moose Peterson, Stephen Johnson, and John Shaw, take a moment to study some of their wonderful, sweeping images. One thing you'll find that most have in common is that these landscape shots have three distinct things: (1) a foreground. If shooting a sunset, the shot doesn't start in the water; it starts on the beach. The beach is the foreground. (2) They have a middle ground. In the case of a sunset shot, this would be either the ocean reflecting the sun, or in some cases it can be the sun itself. And lastly, (3) it has a background. In the sunset case, the clouds and the sky. All three elements are there, and you need all three to make a really compelling landscape shot. The next time you're out shooting, ask yourself, "Where's my foreground?" (because that's the one most amateurs seem to forget—their shots are all middle and background). Keeping all three in mind when shooting will help you tell your story, lead the eye, and give your landscape shots more depth.

Another Advantage of Shooting at Dawn

Another advantage of shooting at dawn (rather than at sunset) is that water (in ponds, lakes, bays, etc.) is more still at dawn because there's usually less wind in the morning than in the late afternoon. So, if you're looking for that glassy mirror-like reflection in the lake, you've got a much better shot at getting that effect at dawn than you do at dusk.

The Trick to Shooting Waterfalls



©ISTOCKPHOTO/THIERRY MAFFEIS

Want to get that silky waterfall or that stream effect you see in those pro photos? The secret is leaving your shutter open (for at least a second or two), so the water moves while everything else (the rocks and trees around the waterfall or stream) remains still. Here's what you do: switch your digital camera to shutter priority mode (the S or Tv on your camera's mode dial), and set the shutter speed to 1 or 2 full seconds. Now, even if you're shooting this waterfall on a bit of an overcast day, leaving your shutter open for a few seconds will let way too much light in, and all you'll get is a solid white, completely blown-out photo. That's why the pros do one of two things: (1) they shoot these waterfalls at or before sunrise, or just after sunset, when there is much less light. Or they (2) use a stop-down filter. This is a special darkening filter that screws onto your lens that is so dark it shuts out most of the light coming into your camera. That way, you can leave the shutter open for a few seconds. Such little light comes in that it doesn't totally blow out your photo, and you wind up with a properly exposed photo with lots of glorious silky water. Now, if you don't have a stop-down filter and you run across a waterfall or stream that's deep in the woods (and deep in the shade), you can still get the effect by trying this: put your camera on a tripod, go to aperture priority mode, and set your aperture to the biggest number your lens will allow (probably either f/22 or f/36). This leaves your shutter open longer than usual (but that's okay, you're in deep shade, right?), and you'll get that same silky-looking water.

A Tip for Shooting Forests



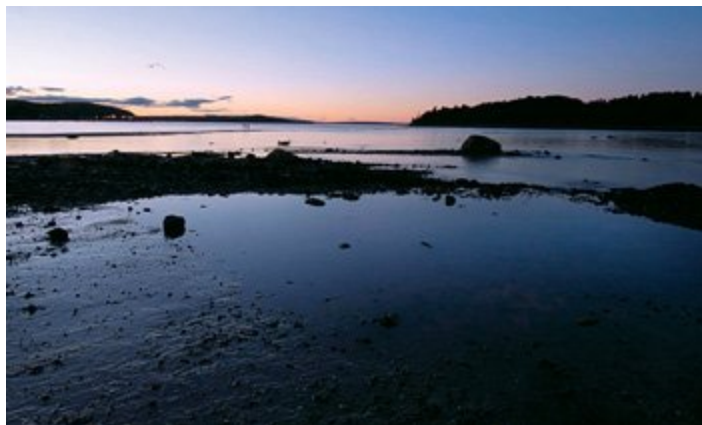
©ISTOCKPHOTO/SIMON OXLEY

Want a great tip for shooting forest scenes? Don't include the ground in your shots. That's right, the ground in the forest is often surprisingly messy (with dead branches, and leaves, and a real cluttered look) and that's why so many pro forest shots don't include the ground—it distracts from the beauty of the trees. So, easy enough—frame your shots so they don't include the ground, and you're shooting better forest shots right off the bat. Now, if the ground looks good, then by all means include it, but if it's a mess, you've got a way to save the shot. Here's another forest shooting tip: overcast days are great for shooting forests because it's difficult to get a decent forest shot in bright, harsh sun. However, there is one exception to this rule: if there's "atmosphere" (fog or mist) in the forest on bright days, the sun rays cutting through the fog or mist can be spectacular.

This Isn't a Forest Tip. It's for Waterfalls

So why is this tip here instead of on the waterfalls page? I ran out of room on that page. The tip is this: when shooting waterfalls, if you don't have a stop-down filter, then you can try putting your polarizing filter on instead. This serves two purposes: (1) it cuts the reflections in the waterfall and on the rocks, and (2) since it darkens, it can eat up about two stops of light for you, so you can shoot longer exposures with it than you could without it. Also, choosing slower shutter speeds exaggerates the silky water effect, so try a few different shutter speeds (4 seconds, 6 seconds, 10 seconds, etc.) and see which one gives you the best effect for what you're currently shooting.

Where to Put the Horizon Line



SCOTT KELBY

When it comes to the question of "Where do I place the horizon?" the answer is pretty easy. Don't take the amateur route and always place the horizon in the dead center of the photo, or your landscape shots will always look like snapshots. Instead, decide which thing you want to emphasize the sky or the ground. If you have a great-looking sky, then put your horizon at the bottom third of your photo (which will give you much more emphasis on the sky). If the ground looks interesting, then make that the star of your photo and place the horizon at the top third of your photo. This puts the emphasis on the ground, and most importantly, either one of these methods will keep your horizon out of the center, which will give your shots more depth and interest.

Really Boring Sky? Break the Rule

If you're shooting a landscape shot with a sky where nothing's really happening, you can break the 1/3 from the top horizon line rule and eliminate as much of the sky from view as possible. Make it 7/8 ground and 1/8 sky, so the attention is totally off the sky, and onto the more interesting foreground.

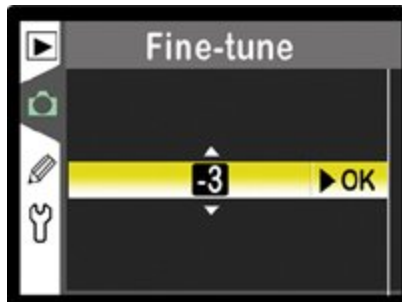
Getting More Interesting Mountain Shots



SCOTT KELBY

One theme you'll see again and again throughout this book is to shoot from angles we don't see every day. For example, if your subject is mountains, don't shoot them from the road at the bottom of the mountain. This is exactly how we see mountains every day when we drive by them on the interstate, so if you shoot them like that (from the ground looking up), you'll create shots that look very normal and average. If you want to create mountain shots that have real interest, give people a view they don't normally see shoot from up high. Either drive up as high as you can on the mountain, or hike up as high as is safe, then set up your camera and shoot down on or across the mountains. (This is the same theory as not shooting down on flowers. We don't shoot down on flowers because that's the view we normally have of them. In turn, we don't shoot up at mountains, because we always see them from that same view. It's boring, regular, and doesn't show your viewer something they haven't seen a hundred times before.)

The Trick for Warmer Sunrises and Sunsets



Here's a trick I picked up from Bill Fortney for getting even warmer sunrises and sunsets. For Nikon shooters, go to your camera's menu and choose Daylight as your white balance. Press the right arrow button to get the Fine-tune screen, dial in 3 (as shown above), and click OK. This does an amazing job of warming these types of photos. If you're a Canon shooter, go to www.scottkelbybooks.com/warmbal for complete step-by-step instructions on how to set the white balance for Canon cameras. *Note:* Don't forget to turn this setting off when you're not shooting sunrises or sunsets. Okay, it wouldn't be the worst thing in the world (it won't ruin all your subsequent shots), but your world will be a little warmer.

Turn on "The Blinkies" to Keep More Detail



Okay, they're technically not called "the blinkies" (that's our nickname for them), they're actually called highlight warnings (or highlight alerts) and having this turned on, and adjusting for it, is a critical part of getting properly exposed landscape shots. This warning shows exactly which parts of your photo have been overexposed to the point that there's no detail in those areas at all. You'll be amazed at how often this happens. For example, even on an overcast day, clouds can blow out (turn solid white with no detail) easily, so we keep our camera's highlight warning turned on. Here's how it works: When the highlight warning is turned on and you look at the shot in your LCD monitor, those blown out areas will start to blink like a slow strobe light. Now, these blinkies aren't always bad for example, if you shoot a shot where the sun is clearly visible, it's going to have the blinkies (I don't mean sunlight, I mean the red ball of the sun). There's not much detail on the surface of the sun, so I'd let that go. However, if your clouds have the blinkies, that's a different story. Probably the quickest way to adjust for this is to use your camera's exposure compensation control (covered on the next page). For now, let's focus on making sure your highlight warning (blinkies) is turned on. If you have a Nikon camera, press the playback button so you can see the photos on your memory card. Now, push the right arrow button until the word Highlight appears below your photo on the LCD monitor. If you have a Canon camera (like a 20D, 30D, or a Rebel), press the playback button to view your images and then press the Info button to see the blinkies.

How to Avoid the Dreaded Blinkies



If you look on your camera's LCD monitor and you see the blinkies appearing in an area that's important to you (like in the clouds, or in someone's white shirt, or in the snow, etc.), then you can use your digital camera's exposure compensation control. Basically, you're going to lower the exposure until the blinkies go away. It usually takes a few test shots (trial and error) to find out how much you have to back down, but normally this only takes a few seconds. Here's how it works:

Nikon: Press the exposure compensation button that appears just behind your shutter button (as shown above). Then move the command dial until your exposure compensation reads $1/3$ (that's minus $1/3$ of a stop). Now take the same shot again and see if the blinkies are gone. If they're not, do the same thing, but lower the amount another $1/3$, so it reads $2/3$ of a stop, and so on, until the blinkies are gone.

Canon: Turn the mode dial to any creative zone mode except manual, then set the exposure compensation by turning the quick control dial on the back of the camera and using the settings mentioned above.

How to Show Size



©ISTOCKPHOTO/JAN PAUL SCHRAGE

If you've ever had a chance to photograph something like the California redwood trees or a huge rock formation out in Utah's Monument Valley, you've probably been disappointed that when you looked at those photos later, you lost all sense of their size. In person, those redwoods were wider around than a truck. In your photos, they could've been the regular pines in your backyard, because they lost their sense of size. That's why, when trying to show the size of an object, you need something in that shot to give the object a sense of scale. That's why many photographers prefer to shoot mountains with people in the scene (hikers, climbers, etc.) because it instantly gives you a frame of reference a sense of scale that lets the viewer immediately have a visual gauge as to how large a mountain, or a redwood, or the world's largest pine cone really is. So, the next time you want to show the sheer size of something, simply add a person to your shot and you've got an instant frame of reference everyone can identify with. It'll make your shots that much stronger. (*Note:* By the way, this also works for things that are very small. Put the object in someone's hands, and it instantly tells the story.)

Don't Set Up Your Tripod. Not Yet



SCOTT KELBY

Okay, so you walk up on a scene (a landscape, a mountain range, a waterfall, etc.) and you set up your tripod and start shooting. What are the chances that you just happened to walk up on the perfect angle to shoot your subject? Pretty slim. But that's what most people do: they walk up on a scene, set up their tripod right where they're standing, and they start shooting. It's no big surprise that they wind up with the same shot everybody else got: the "walk up" shot. Don't fall into this trap: before you set up your tripod, take a moment and simply walk around. View your subject from different angles, and chances are (in fact, it's almost guaranteed) that you'll find a more interesting perspective in just a minute or two. Also, hand-hold your camera and look through the viewfinder to test your angle out. Once you've found the perfect angle (and not just the most convenient one), you can then set up your tripod and start shooting. Now the odds are in your favor for getting a better than average take on your subject. This is one of the big secrets the pros use every day (legendary landscape photographer John Shaw has been teaching this concept for years): they don't take the walk-up shot. They first survey the scene, look for the best angle, the best view, the interesting vantage point, and then (and only then) they set up their tripod. It sounds like a little thing (surveying the scene before you set up), but it's the little things that set the pros apart.

The Trick to Getting Richer Colors



One tool the pros use to get richer, more vivid colors is the polarizing filter. Of all the add-ons used by landscape pros, the polarizing filter is probably the most essential. This filter screws onto the end of your lens and it basically does two things: (1) it cuts the reflections in your photo big time (especially in water, on rocks, or on any reflective surface), and (2) it can often add more rich blues into your skies by darkening them and generally giving you more saturated colors throughout (and who doesn't want that?). Two tips: (1) polarizers have the most effect when you're shooting at a 90° angle from the sun, so if the sun is in front of you or behind you, they don't work all that well, and (2) you'll use the rotating ring on the filter to vary the amount (and angle) of polarization (it's also helpful so you can choose to remove reflections from either your sky or the ground). Once you see for yourself the difference a polarizing filter makes, you'll say something along the lines of, "Ahhhh, so that's how they do it."

Polarizing Tip

If there's a lens the polarizing filter doesn't love, it's the super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm or 10.5mm, etc.). Because the field of view is so wide, the sky winds up having uneven shades of blue, and because of that, many pros avoid using polarizers with super-wide-angle lenses. Also, when it comes to polarizers, it pays to buy a good one that way it will be truly color balanced. It doesn't pay to scrimp here.

What to Shoot in Bad Weather



©ISTOCKPHOTO/DUNCAN WALKER

Okay, so you're thinking that it's an overcast or drizzly day, and you're going to spend the day inside working on your photos in Photoshop. That's not the worst idea in the world, but you'll miss some great shooting opportunities, like:

1. Right after a rain, while it's still cloudy and dark, is the perfect time to shoot foliage, forests (the green leaves look more saturated and alive, even leaves on the ground look good, plus the water droplets on the leaves and flowers add interest), mossy rivers, and waterfalls (you can use slower shutter speeds while the sun is buried behind the overcast rain clouds).
2. If it's storming, there's a good chance that right after the rain stops, and the clouds break, and the sun peeks through, there's a very dramatic shot coming. It may only last a couple of minutes, and it will either start storming again or clear up and just get really sunny (an outdoor photographer's enemy), so be ready for those few magical moments between storms. They're worth waiting for.
3. Before the storm "lets loose," you can get some really amazing skies, with angry clouds and sometimes colorful light or strong light beams. Most people miss these shots, so be ready (just don't shoot in the rain, to protect you and your gear).

Atmosphere Is Your Friend



©ISTOCKPHOTO/FRED DE GROOT

Besides just keeping us here on earth, the atmosphere (low-hanging clouds or fog) can make for some really interesting landscape photos (we're talking soft, diffused light heaven). In fact, some of my personal favorite shots are taken when the fog rolls in between mountains (but of course, you need to shoot this from above the fog on a higher mountaintop). I've shot horses on the beach with the fog rolling in and it creates almost a Hollywood fantasy effect that looks great on film (digital film, anyway). Also, beams of light in the forest, beaming through moisture in the air, or through thick fog, can be just amazing. Get up early (or miss dinner) to make the most of these atmospheric effects.

Protect Your Gear Tip

Fog and moisture are fancy names for water, and digital cameras flat out do not like water, so make sure your gear is not getting silently soaked. You can buy rain gear for your camera from B&H, but in a pinch, use the shower cap from your hotel room and put it around your camera it's not pretty, but it works.

Getting Rid of Lens FlareThe Manual Way



MATT KLOSKOWSKI

Another great reason to wear a baseball cap when you shoot (besides the two obvious reasons: [1] it protects you from the harmful rays of the sun, and [2] it looks cool) is to help eliminate (or at the very least, reduce) lens flare. If you're using a lens hood on your camera, that can certainly help, but I've found that often it alone is not enough. That's where your ballcap comes in just take it off and position it above the right or left top side of your lens (depending on where the sun is positioned). Then look through your camera's viewfinder to see (1) right where to position your ballcap so it blocks the lens flare from the sun (it's easier than you think), and (2) to make sure your ballcap doesn't show up in your photo (I've had more than one photo with the edge of a ballcap in the frame. I guess that's why they make Photoshop to remove silly stuff like that). I'm still surprised how well this totally manual technique for removing lens flare works.

The Landscape Photographer's Secret Weapon



So, earlier you learned about the polarizer and how essential that filter is. This filter, the neutral density gradient filter, isn't necessarily essential but it is the secret weapon of professional landscape photographers. It lets them balance the exposure between the ground and the sky to capture a range of exposure which, without it, their camera could never pull off (it's either going to expose for the ground or for the sky, but not both at the same time). For example, let's say you're shooting a landscape at sunset. If you expose for the sky, the sky will look great but the ground will be way too dark. If you expose for the ground, then the sky will be way too light. So, how do you get both the sky and the ground to look right? With a neutral density gradient filter (a filter that's dark at the top and smoothly graduates down to transparent at the bottom). What this essentially does is darken the sky (which would have been overexposed), while leaving the ground untouched, but the brilliance of it is the gradient it moves from darkening (at the top of the filter) and then graduates smoothly down to transparent (on the ground). That way it only darkens the sky, but it does so in a way that makes the top of the sky darker, and then your sky gradually becomes lighter until the filter has no effect at all by the time it reaches the ground. The result is a photo where both the sky and ground look properly exposed.

Keeping Your Horizons Straight



There is nothing that looks worse than a crooked horizon line. It's like when you don't get the fleshtone color right in a photo it just jumps out at people (and people can't resist pointing this out. It doesn't matter if you've taken a photo with composition that would make Ansel Adams proud, they'll immediately say, "Your photo's crooked"). A great way to avoid this is with a double level a simple little gizmo that slides into your flash hot shoe (that little bracket on the top of your camera where you'd attach an external flash). This double level gizmo has a mini-version of the bubble level you'd find at Home Depot and it lets you clearly see, in an instant, if your camera is level (and thus, your horizon line). The double level version works whether your camera is shooting in portrait or landscape orientation and is worth its weight in gold (of course, that's not saying very much, because I doubt the thing weighs even one ounce, but you get my drift). As luck would have it, they're more expensive than they should be between \$25 and \$75 but still very worth it.

Shooting on Cloudy Days



SCOTT KELBY

This is another one of those things that may initially illicit a "Duh" response, but I've been out shooting with more photographers than I can think of who didn't think of this simple concept when shooting on gray, overcast days: shoot to avoid the sky. I know, it sounds silly when you're reading it here, but I've heard it time and time again, "Ah, the sky is so gray today, I'm not going to shoot." Baloney. Just take shots that limit the amount of visible sky. That way, if you make a tonal adjustment later in Photoshop (that's a fancy way of saying, "I'm going to make the sky look bluer than it really was on that gray, overcast day"), you won't have to work very hard. This just happened on my last shoot, where we'd have 20 minutes of blue sky and then an hour and a half of gray, overcast sky. I just really limited the amount of sky in my photos (I was shooting urban city photos), and then it took just seconds to fix in Photoshop. Here's what I did:

- Step One. I opened one of the photos where the sky looked nice and blue, then took the Eyedropper tool (I), and clicked on the blue sky to make that my Foreground color.
- Step Two. I then opened a photo with small amounts of gray, overcast sky and with the Magic Wand tool (W) clicked in the sky to select it (which took all of two seconds).
- Step Three. I added a new blank layer above my Background layer and filled the selection with my Foreground color. That's it: my gray sky was blue.

Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 1



RANDY HUFFORD

There is something so fascinating about what happens when you stitch together five or six (or more) landscape photos into one long, single image. It's as close as you can get (with a photograph anyway) to recreating the experience of being there. However, when it comes to creating these panoramic images, it can be either a piece of cake or a huge nightmare, and it's almost entirely based on how you shoot the panorama in the first place. Do it right and Photoshop will stitch the whole thing together for you with little or no input from you at all. Do it wrong and you'll be working your butt off for hours to try to get your pano together, and Photoshop will mock you every step of the way. Now, although this will take more than one page to describe, shooting panos right is easy you just have to follow the rules that make it easy to assemble the separate photos into one seamless image in Photoshop. Here we go:

1. Shoot your pano on a tripod. If you don't, you'll pay.
2. Shoot vertically (in portrait orientation) rather than horizontally (in landscape orientation). It'll take more shots to cover the same area, but you'll have less edge distortion and a better looking pano for your extra effort.
3. Switch your camera's white balance to Cloudy. If you leave it set to Auto, your white balance may (will) change between segments, which is bad, bad, bad.
4. There's more go to the next page...

Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 2

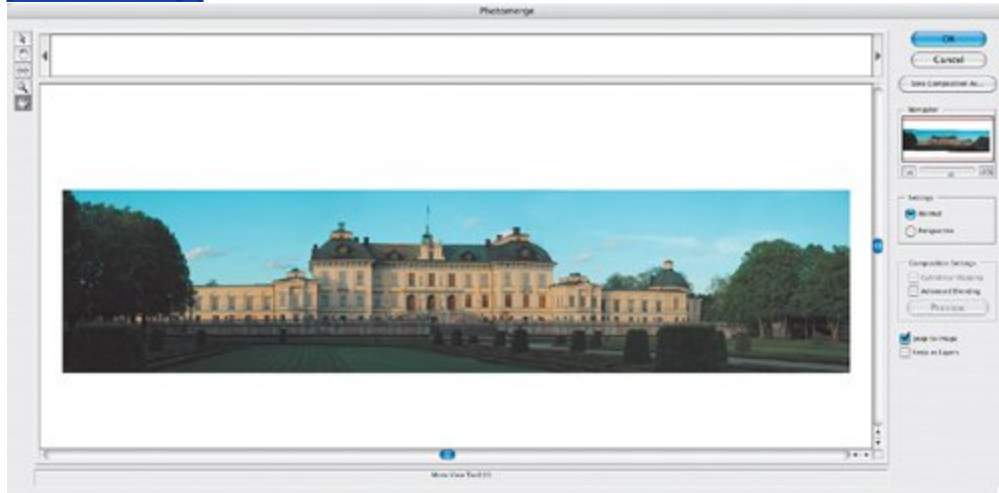


RANDY HUFFORD

5. Press your shutter button halfway down to set your exposure, then look in your viewfinder and make note of the f-stop and shutter speed. Now switch your camera to manual mode and dial in that f-stop and shutter speed. If you don't, and you shoot in an auto exposure mode of any kind, your exposure may (will) change for one or more of the segments, and this will drive you insane when working in Photoshop.
6. Once you focus on the first segment, turn off auto focus for your lens. That way, your camera doesn't refocus as you shoot the different segments, which would be (will be) very bad.
7. Before you shoot your first segment, shoot one shot with your finger in front of the lens that way you'll know where your pano starts. Do it again after the last shot.
8. Overlap each segment by 20-25%. That's right, make sure that about 1/4 of your first shot appears in the second shot. Each segment needs to overlap by at least 20% so Photoshop's stitching software can match things up. This is very important.
9. Shoot fairly quickly especially if clouds are moving behind your landscape. Don't be lollygagging for two minutes between each shot. Get 'er done, or something could change (lighting, clouds, etc.) in your pano, which will really mess things up.
10. Use a shutter release, or at the very least a self timer, so you don't have any camera movement as you're shooting each segment. Nothing's worse than one segment that is blurry.

Tips for Shooting Panoramas, Part 3

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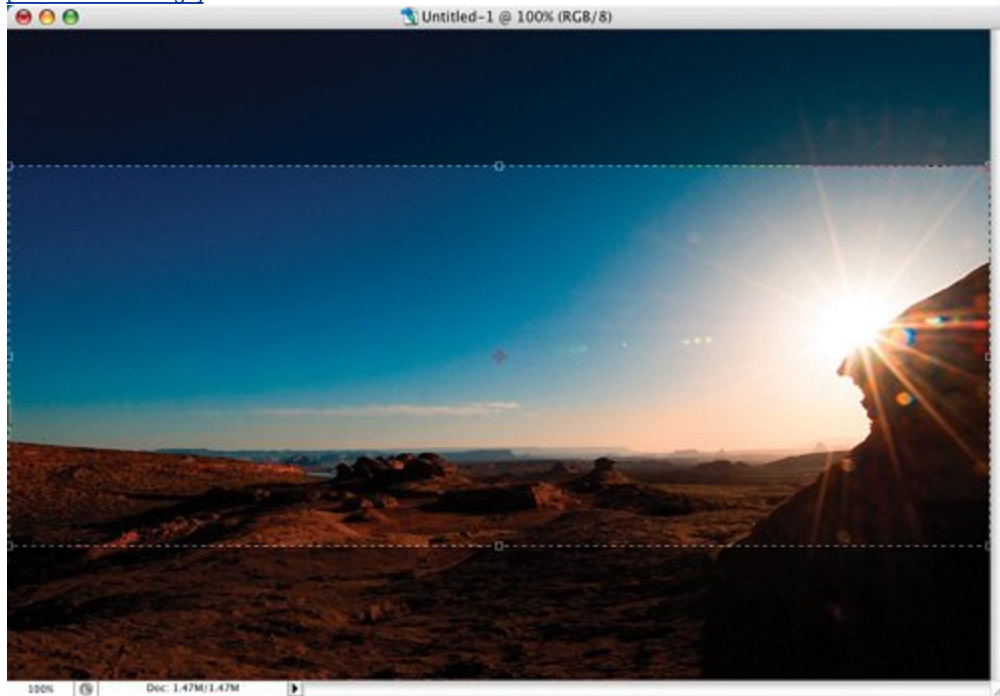
SCOTT KELBY

Now, if you followed the rules set out on the previous two pages, the rest is easy:

- Step One. Open Photoshop and then open all the photo segments (so all the photo segments are open at the same time).
- Step Two. Go under Photoshop's File menu, under Automate, and choose Photomerge.
- Step Three. In the resulting dialog, from the Use pop-up menu, choose Open Files. Make sure the Attempt to Automatically Arrange Source Images checkbox is turned on, and then click OK.
- Step Four. When the main Photomerge dialog appears, it will stitch the photos together into one seamless panorama (well, as long as you followed the rules laid out earlier). If you see a small seam at the top, between two segments, go ahead and click OK anyway chances are it will be gone when the final image is created. If for some reason it's not, use the Clone Stamp tool (S) to cover it by pressing-and-holding the Option key (PC: Alt key) and clicking nearby in an area of sky that looks similar to sample that area. Then, choose a soft-edged brush from the Brush Picker and clone (paint) over the little seam to hide it.

Faking Panoramas

[\[View full size image\]](#)



SCOTT KELBY

If you have Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, there's a great way to create a fake panoramacrop the photo so it becomes a panorama. Just get the Crop tool (C) and click-and-drag so it selects just the center of your photo (as shown above), cropping off the top and bottom. Then press Return (PC: Enter) and the top and bottom are cropped away, leaving you with a wide panoramic crop of your original photo. Hey, don't knock it until you've tried it.

Why You Need a Wide-Angle Lens



If you're shooting landscapes, you've probably come back from a shoot more than once and been disappointed that the incredible vista you saw in person didn't transfer to your photos. It's really tough to create a 2D photo (which is what still photos are two-dimensional) that has the depth and feeling of being there. That's why I recommend one of two things:

1. Don't try to capture it all. That's right, use a zoom lens and deliberately capture just a portion of the scene that suggests the whole. These can often be much more powerful than trying to fit everything into one photo, which often can lead to a photo without a clear subject, and with distracting images and backgrounds. This is why I often shoot with a 70200mm lens to get in tight on a portion of the scene.
2. Buy a super-wide-angle lens. Not a fish-eye lens a super-wide-angle lens (like a 12mm). If you're trying to capture it all, a super-wide-angle (sometimes called ultra-wide-angle) lens is often just the trick you need to take in the big picture. My favorite outdoor lens is my 1224mm zoom lens (which is also a good sports shooting lens by the way). I must admit, I rarely use the 24mm end, because I use this lens when I'm trying to get "the big picture," so I use the 12mm end most of the time. You'll love what it does to clouds, almost giving them a sense of movement along the edges.

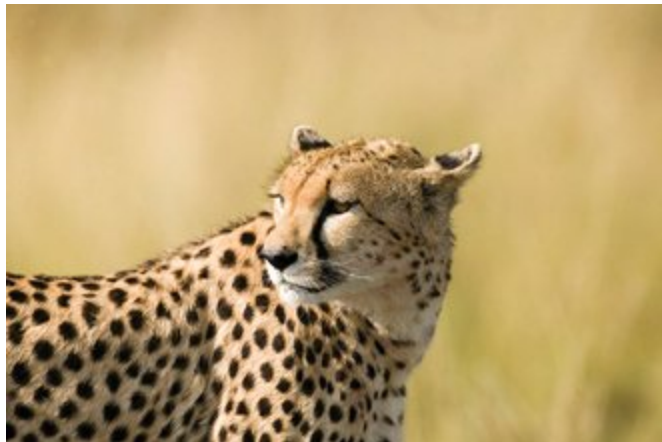
Shooting Wildlife? Aim at Their Eyes



PEGGY GUENZEL

Okay, that headline doesn't sound great when you say it out loud (it sounds like we're actually shooting wildlife with a gun, rather than taking photos), but it's right on the money. When you're shooting wildlife photography, your point of focus needs to be the animal's eyes. If they're not in focus, it doesn't matter what else is. Oftentimes you'll be capturing wildlife in motion (or in flight, as the case may be), and that's where it's especially important to make certain the eyes are in focus. If you're using a panning technique (where you follow the moving animal with your lens), make sure your focal point is the eyes. Everything else can be blurred, but keep those eyes tack sharp and you'll have a winner.

Don't Crop Wildlife in Motion Too Close



PEGGY GUENZEL

If you're shooting wildlife, when you're composing the image, don't frame it so close that the animal has nowhere to go. In other words, give the animal some space in front of the direction it's going for a much stronger compositionone that tells a story. If you crop in too tight and don't leave room for the animal to exit the frame, it's almost like trapping them in your shot, and the photo will look uncomfortable to the viewer. When you're composing in the viewfinder, leave some extra space to "run" in front of your subject, and your photo will be that much stronger for it.

Shooting Wildlife? Get in Really Tight



There is a phenomenon that happens when shooting wildlife that doesn't seem to happen when shooting anything else. However close your subject looks in your view-finder, when you see the actual photo it seems only half as close as you remember. It's crazy, but it's consistent; it always looks much farther away than you hoped. So, when it comes to shooting wildlife, you want to get in incredibly tight. That's why the pros shoot with those giant 400mm and larger lenses. But if your budget doesn't allow for that (I know mine doesn't), you can cheat and use a teleconverter (also sometimes called a tele-extender). These basically extend the reach of your current telephoto (or zoom) lens by magnifying them. So if you have a 200mm telephoto (or zoom) lens (which is already equivalent to around a 300mm thanks to digital), and add a 1.4x or 2x teleconverter, you instantly have the equivalent of a 450mm or 600mm traditional telephoto lens. A Canon 1.4x teleconverter runs around \$275, and a Nikon 2x teleconverter runs around \$300 (make sure you check to see that the teleconverter you buy works with your current lens; get it to match your make and model).

What to Shoot at Sunset



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ANDRZEJ BURAK

Besides just shooting the sunset itself, another great subject to shoot at sunset is silhouettes. There are two basic rules to shooting silhouettes: (1) make sure the subject (or the object) you're silhouetting is easily recognizable. I see lots of silhouette snapshots where my first thought is, "What is that thing?" Keep the object simple, and it will work much better. (2) Position your subject directly in front of the setting sun, so the sun is covered and helps outline your silhouette, then expose for the sky (this will pretty much make certain that your subject will appear in a black silhouette).

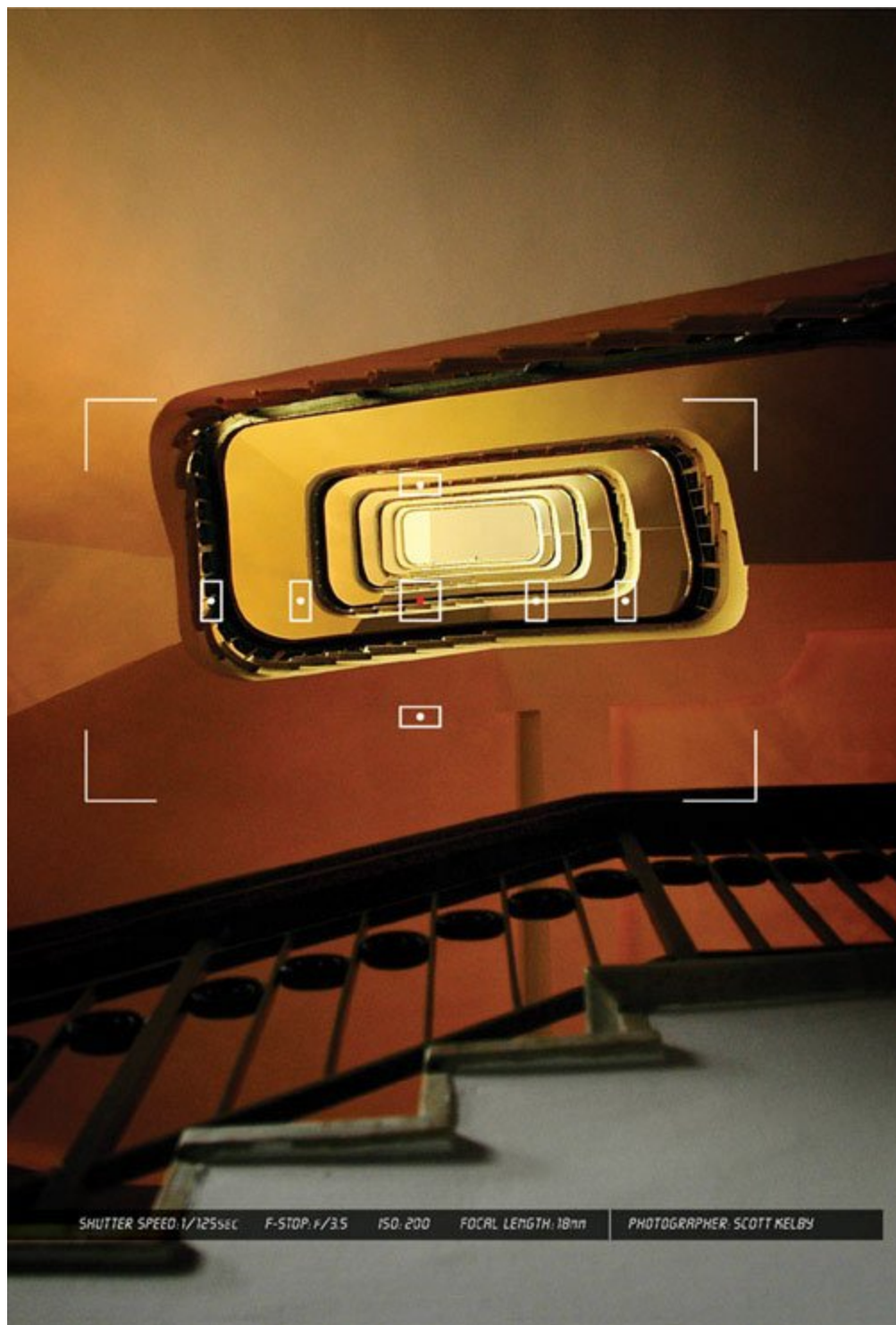
Silhouette Tip

Keep an eye on lens flare when you're shooting silhouettes because you're basically shooting into the sun. You'll see a lot of classic silhouettes where the sun is peeking around the subject just a tiny bit, and that's okay if you like that effect, but make sure it doesn't reveal too much detail in your subject—they should remain black.

Chapter Five. Shooting Sports Like a Pro

Better Bring Your Checkbook

[\[View full size image\]](#)



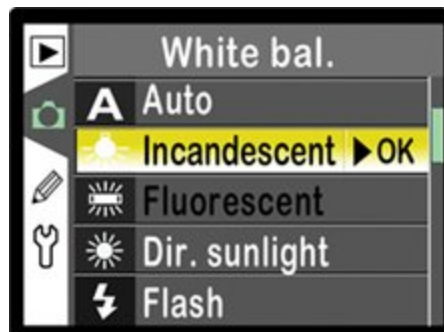
▶ This is the one chapter in the book where you have a choice. Do you want to get much better at shooting sports using the tips the pros use, but pretty much use your own existing gear? Or, do you want to seriously shoot sports for a living? Here's why I mention this: we're going to conduct a brief, totally scientific test which will quickly determine which path you should take. Ready? Let's begin. Question 1: This book retails for \$19.99. When you turned the book over to look at the price, how did you react? You thought: (a) \$19.99, that's cheap enough I think I'll buy it; (b) I dunno, it's \$19.99 I hope this is worth it; (c) \$19.99, that's pretty steep, but I really need to learn this stuff; or (d) \$19.99! \$19.99! I can't believe they're charging \$19.99! Well, I'm not happy about it, but I have to have this book. Answer: If you answered a, b, c, or d, you're not ready to enter the world of professional sports photography, because professional sports photographers spend so much on their equipment

that they would never even think of looking at the price of anything. Ever. They see something they want and they just take it to the checkout counter and buy it, never questioning its price, because they figure they've spent so much on their photography equipment, there's no way any book, or flat screen TV, or luxury car could ever cost anything close. So what are we mere mortals to do? We use the tricks in this chapter to get better shots with what we've got. Of course, a few accessories wouldn't hurt, right?

 **PREV**

NEXT 

Set Your White Balance for Indoor Sports



If you're going to be shooting sports indoors, you can count on your photos having a yellow or green tint, caused by the indoor lighting used at most indoor events. You can save yourself a lot of Photoshop editing down the road if you change your white balance to either Fluorescent or Tungsten/Incandescent now, in the camera. (Set it at Fluorescent and do a test shot, then take a look at your test shot in your LCD monitor. If the overall color looks too yellow or green, then try Tungsten/Incandescent. See the Nikon menu above.) By doing this, you're off setting the yellow or green tint you would have had, which will keep you from pulling your hair out later. If you're shooting in RAW format, you can always reset the white balance later in your RAW processing software. But by setting the correct white balance in the camera, at least you'll see your photos in the proper color temperature when you view them in the LCD monitor on the back of your camera.

Don't Use Color Filters

Your first thought might be to add a screw-on color balance filter to your lens to off set the indoor color cast, but don't do it. When you're shooting sports, you're already going to be challenged by lower than ideal lighting situations, and adding a filter takes away even more light. You're better off using a custom white balance setting because it only affects the color of light, not the amount.

Shoot at a 1/640 Sec. Shutter Speed or Faster



©ISTOCKPHOTO/JASEN LEATHERS

With sports photography, most of the time you're going to want to stop the action, and to do that you'll have to switch to shutter priority mode (or manual mode if you're comfortable with it), and then shoot at a speed of at least 1/640 of a second (or faster) to stop the motion and keep your image sharp. The slowest you can generally get away with is 1/500 of a second, but that's iffy. Go with 1/640 or higher for better results (there are times when you're going to intentionally want to shoot at slower speeds so you can blur parts of the photo to exaggerate the movement and speed, but for most situations, you'll want to freeze the motion with a faster shutter speed like we're using here).

Pro Sports Shooting Is Dang Expensive



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Of all the photographic professions, professional sports photography is probably the most expensive, so if you think you want to go this route, better bring your checkbook. The main reason it's so expensive is because many sporting events are held indoors (or in domed stadiums) or at night, so you'll need the most expensive (fastest) lenses money can buy (well, only if you want to compete at a professional level). For example, you're going to need some long telephoto lenses (ideally 400mm or 600mm) and since you'll generally be shooting in lower-light situations, they'll need to be f/2.8 to f/4 lenses. If you haven't priced quality 400mm f/2.8 lenses, they're around \$6,600. Each. You'll also need more than one camera body, and more than one external flash. Plus a couple of monopods—one or two to hold your long heavy lenses, and one to strap your flash units (which cost around \$600 apiece) to. Also, to be competitive (with the pro shooters), you're going to need a camera body that shoots around 8 frames per second (which means as a Canon shooter, you're going to spend around \$6,900 for an EOS 1DS Mark II or for a Nikon shooter, you're going to spend around \$4,700 for a D2Xs). By the time you add up two camera bodies, a handful of flashes, some long, expensive lenses, monopods, teleconverters, lots of very fast memory cards (plan on shooting around 900 photos for a typical baseball or football game), you're in the \$30,000 and up range, just for starters. It helps if you were a doctor or lawyer first (it doesn't make you a better sports photographer, but it helps you pay for your gear).

Don't Plan on Changing Lenses



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ANTONIO HARRISON

Now, don't read this headline to mean you only need one lens for sports photography. It means just what it says, don't plan on changing lensesplan on changing cameras. That's right, if you're really into sports photography, you'll miss "the shot" if you have to change lenses. That's why the pros have multiple camera bodies hanging around their necksso they can change from a wide-angle lens to a 400mm telephoto in an instant. If they didn't do this, while they were changing lenses, the guy next to them would be getting "the shot" (which winds up on the cover of the magazine). If you want to compete with the big boys, you'll be hanging more than one camera body around your neck so you're ready to catch the shot with a moment's notice. I told you this digital sports photography thing was expensive.

Which Lenses to Use



©ISTOCKPHOTO/TAN KIAN KHOON

When you're shooting sports, carrying a load of lenses and a big camera bag (even a camera backpack) will strain your back and just add to your frustration. Instead, go light with just two lenses:

1. A wide-angle lens (like a 1224mm zoom). You'll need these wide angles to capture full stadium shots, full court shots, close-up group shots, etc.
2. A 300mm or 400mm telephoto lens (or a 200400mm zoom). You'll be better off if you can spring for a VR (Vibration Reduction for Nikon cameras) or an IS (Image Stabilization for Canon cameras) lens, because you'll be able to hand-hold more shots in the lower lights of indoor events or nighttime events.

Again, you're not going to want to change lenses, so ideally you'd put one lens on one camera body, and one lens on the other. The only other thing you'll need to carry (besides extra memory cards and a backup battery) is a 1.4x teleconverter to get you even closer to the action (these magnify the amount of zoom, turning a 300mm telephoto into a 450mm).

Note: Some pros advise against 2x teleconverters because they feel 2x photos are not as sharp and you lose up to two f-stops of light, making it harder to get the fast shutter speeds you need. To move all this stuff around with the greatest of ease, try a Tenba or Domke photo vest, or at the very least, keep your extra gear in a photo waist pack rather than a camera bag or backpack. You'll thank me later.

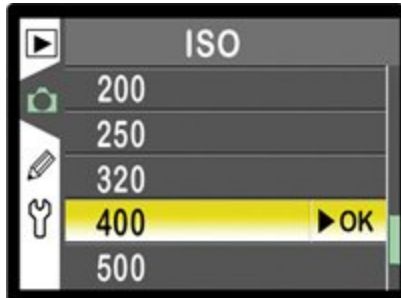
Pre-Focus to Get the Shot



©ISTOCKPHOTO/GALINA BARSKAYA

If you're covering an event where you have a pretty good idea where the action is going to happen (for example, you're covering baseball and you know the runner on second base is headed to third, or you're covering snowboarding and you know approximately where the snowboarder is going to land), pre-focus on that spot, so when it happens, all you have to do is press the shutter button. You can start by leaving auto focus on, and then focus on the spot where you expect the action to occur, then switch your lens to manual focus and leave the focus alone (it's set). Now you can pretty much relax and watch the event unfold. When the runner (jumper, skier, etc.) gets near your pre-focused point, just aim back to that area and fire knowing the focus is locked onto that point. No waiting for auto focus to either get, or miss, the focus. You're good to go just fire away.

Raise Your ISO to Get the Speed You Need



Ideally, you'd have a super-fast long lens (like an f/2.8 or f/4, right?) for your sports shooting, but those cost a bundle. So, how are you going to shoot sports with your f/5.6 zoom lens? By raising the ISO, that's how (see Nikon menu above). You can get away with 400 or 800 for most decent quality digital SLRs these days (the Canons, Nikons, etc.). That should give you the 1/640 sec. or higher speed you need to freeze the motion of sports without too much visible noise. Now, if there's enough light where you're shooting so you don't need to raise the ISO don't do it. Preferably, you'll leave your ISO at 100 or 200 (or whatever the lowest ISO is that your camera allows), but in situations where your lens just isn't fast enough (which will probably be the case when shooting indoors with f/5.6 lenses, which are fairly common), you'll have no choice but to raise the ISO. You do that in the menu on the back of your camera (as shown here). Luckily, you can usually get away with an f/5.6 lens when shooting in daylight, but as soon as you move indoors, you're probably going to have to raise your ISO to get enough shutter speed to freeze the action. That's why fast lenses (f/2.8 and f/4) are so important to pro sports shooters.

The Pros Know the Game



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ROB FRIEDMAN

If you know the game you're shooting (for example, if you're a baseball fanatic and you're shooting a baseball game), you're going to get better shots than the next guy because you're going to know where the next play is likely to unfold. This is a huge advantage in sports shooting, and being able to anticipate when and where the big moment will unfold can make all the difference in getting "the shot." The key is you have to watch the game while you're shooting, so you can see the play unfolding and be ready to aim where you feel the action will take place. You won't always be right, but you'll be right enough that you'll get the shot more often than not. So, what if you're assigned to shoot a game you don't know well? Go to Blockbuster and rent some videos, go to the magazine store and buy some magazines on the topic, and study how the pros that cover that sport are shooting it find out who the stars are in that sport and make sure you follow them (after all, the stars are most likely to be involved in the big plays, right?). It basically comes down to this: if you know the game, you're putting yourself in the best position to get "the shot." If you don't know the game, the only way you'll get "the shot" is by sheer luck. That's not a good career strategy.

Don't Always Focus on the Winner



©ISTOCKPHOTO/JAMES BOULETTE

In sports photography (and in sports in general), it's only natural to follow the winner. If someone scores a critical point, you'll be capturing shots of the athlete that made the big score, right? If a team wins, you'll be shooting shots of the winning team celebrating. But if you follow that tradition of covering only the winner, you might miss some of the most dramatic shots with the most powerful story-telling angle, which are the expressions and reactions of the loser or the losing team. This is especially important if you just missed the action playquickly switch to the reaction of the guy who missed the ball, or didn't block the shot, or missed the goal, etc. Sometimes their reactions are more fascinating than those of the person who makes the shot. Next time, try catching the expression of the golfer who missed the putt (or the golfer who lost because her opponent just sank a 40 footer), and see if it doesn't elicit as much or more emotion as a shot of the winner.

Shooting in Burst Mode



Nikon



Canon

Much of the shooting you'll be doing in sports photography will require you to take bursts of shots (four or more shots per second) in order to make sure you get the shot while a play is in motion. So, you'll need to set your camera to shoot multiple shots while you hold down the shutter button (this is called burst mode on some digital cameras). By default, most cameras shoot one frame at a time, so you'll have to switch this burst mode on.

On Nikon cameras, you can switch the camera's mode to continuous (where holding down the shutter release takes multiple photos) by holding down the shooting mode button (found to the left of the viewfinder) and rotating the main command dial until you see an icon of a stack of photos in the top right of the camera's LCD monitor.

On Canon cameras, press the Drive•ISO button (which appears just in front of the LCD panel on the top-right side of the camera), then rotate the main dial (just behind the shutter release button) until you see an icon that looks like a stack of photos on the right side of the LCD panel. If you have a 30D, you can switch to high-speed continuous shooting mode by rotating the main dial until you see an H next to the stack of photos icon.

Now, you can simply hold down the shutter button to fire multiple shots.

Stability for Shooting Sports



©ISTOCKPHOTO/TOMASZ SZYMANSKI

Sports photographers don't generally use tripods for a number of reasons: (1) they're not mobile enough for the style of fast-action shooting that typifies sports photography, (2) many professional sports won't allow the use of tripods, and (3) having a tripod set up near the playing field (in football, basketball, etc.) has the potential to injure a player. That's why sports shooters, especially those shooting with long lenses, use monopods instead. These one-legged versions of tripods generally wind up supporting those long lenses (the lens attaches directly to the monopod itself for support and to keep the lens and camera still during the low-light situations many sporting events are played under). Monopods are easy to move (or to quickly move out of the way if need be), and many professional sports that have banned tripods allow monopods. The carbon fiber monopods are the most popular today because, while they can hold a lot of weight, the carbon fiber makes them surprisingly lightweight. Now, not surprisingly, they're not cheap (nothing in sports photography is).

Shoot Vertically for More Impact



©ISTOCKPHOTO/GAVIN MACVICAR

Much of pro sports photography is shot vertically because it's easier to fill the frame with your subject (plus, it's ideal for magazine covers, ads, etc.). Just turn the camera sideways, get in tight (with your long lens) and make the magic happen (so to speak). This particularly holds true if you're shooting a single athlete, rather than two or more, where a horizontal shot might work best, but when it comes to shooting a single subject, your best bet is to go vertical. That being said, if you want to really cover your bases (like the way I worked that sports metaphor in there), shoot both as much as possible. As my tech editor Bill Fortney says, "The editor will always ask for the orientation you didn't shoot."

Pan to Show Motion



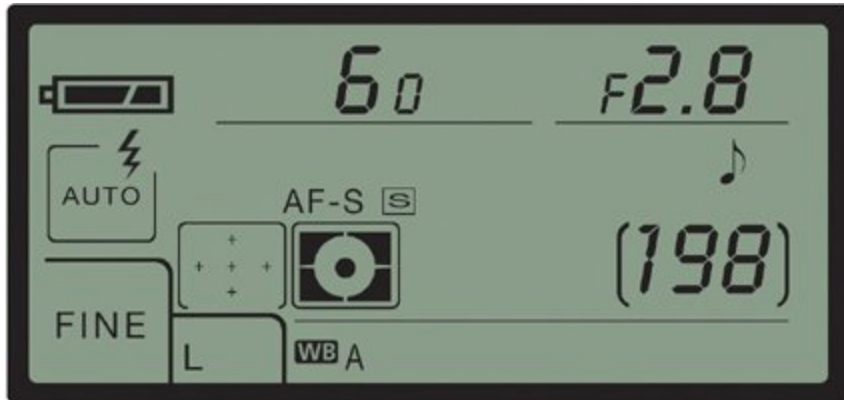
©ISTOCKPHOTO/ANDREA LEONE

For this entire chapter we've been talking about using super-fast shutter speeds to freeze the motion of sporting events, but there are times when it's more dramatic to emphasize the motion and let parts of the photo become intentionally blurry from movement. There are three keys to this technique:

1. Use a slow shutter speed ideally, either 1/30 of a second or 1/60 of a second. So, switch to shutter priority mode (using the mode dial on the top of your digital camera) and set the shutter speed accordingly.
2. Pan right along with your subject following them with your camera. Believe it or not, it's the camera's motion that creates the blurring background, because you're trying to move (pan) right along with the athlete so they remain sharp while everything around them appears blurred.
3. Use continuous shooting (burst) mode for your best chance to capture a sharp shot capturing multiple shots per second really pays off here.

One important thing to remember: Don't stop panning when the athlete leaves your frame continue panning for a couple of seconds afterwards to get a smooth release.

Shoot Wide Open



By shooting wide open, I mean shoot as close to your wide open aperture as possible (so if you have an f/2.8 lens, shoot at f/2.8 or one stop up). This will pay off in two ways:

1. This will blur the background, creating a more dramatic, dynamic, and uncluttered photo of your subject. Busy backgrounds are a problem when shooting sports, and shooting with a telephoto lens at such a wide open aperture gives you a very shallow depth of field (meaning your subject in the foreground is in focus, while the background is out of focus).
2. You'll be able to shoot at faster shutter speeds, which will greatly help when shooting indoors under artificial low-light situations.

Go for the Face



©ISTOCKPHOTO/SUZANNE TUCKER

When you're shooting athletes, what's the most important thing to capture? Generally, it's their face. It's their facial expressions that tell the story, and it's their faces that people want to see. So if you're not capturing that, you're missing "the shot." Don't worry about shooting close-ups of their hands, or the ball, or their feet kicking up dirt, etc. Want a photo that's going to capture the imagination of your viewer? Then go for the face. It's the "money shot"!

RAW or JPEG for Sports Shooters?



Because of the fact that much of sports photography is taken in burst mode (see page [103](#)) and the fact that you only have so much memory space in your camera's multiple-shot buffer, the larger the photos you take, the quicker that buffer will become full. When it's full, you're done shootin' (well, at least until it has time to write the shots to your memory card, which empties the buffer again). That's why many pro sports photographers choose to shoot in JPEG format rather than RAW. It's because JPEG files are considerably smaller in file size so more of them fit in the buffer (plus, since they're smaller, they write to your memory card faster, so you can effectively shoot more uninterrupted shots in JPEG format vs. RAW format). Now, there are some purists who feel so strongly about shooting in RAW for every occasion (including shots of their kid's birthday party at Chuck E. Cheese) that reading about anyone advocating any file format other than RAW sends them scrambling into a tower with a high-powered rifle to pick off pedestrians. To them, I just say, "Remember, RAW is a file format. Not a religion." (By the way, I know a popular *Sports Illustrated* magazine shooter who now sets his cameras to shoot RAW+JPEG, which captures both file formats at the same time. Just thought you'd like to know.)

Composing for Sports



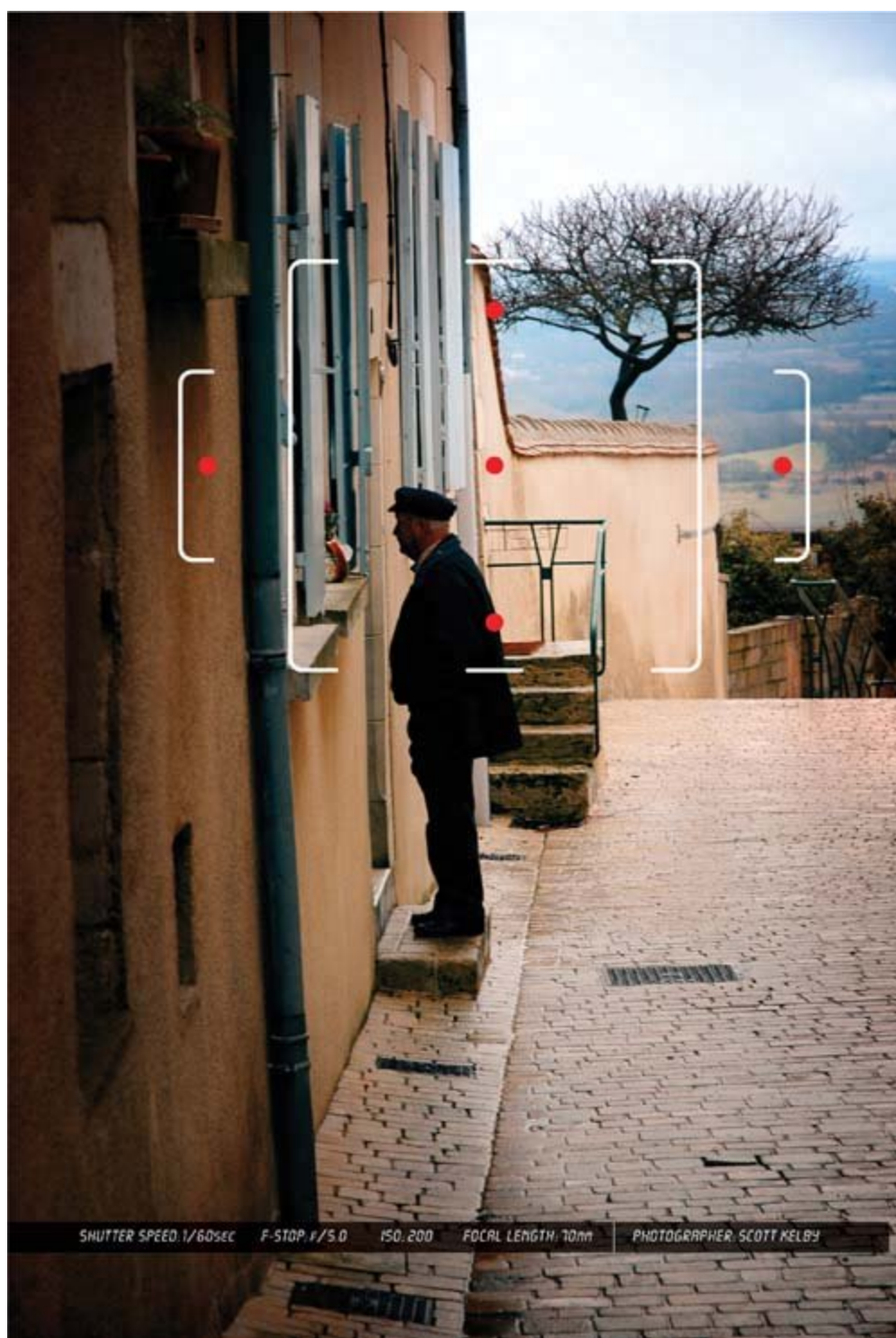
©ISTOCKPHOTO/GLENN JENKINSON

When composing your sports images, use the same technique we talked about earlier in shooting wildlife ([Chapter 4](#)) give your athlete somewhere to go. Don't compose the shot so your athlete is running out of the frame, compose it so there's room in front of the athlete to move to continue his visual story, so the athlete (like the wildlife) doesn't look boxed in. It's as uncomfortable a look for sports as it is for wildlife, so when you're composing, be sure to leave some running room (i.e., for a shot of an athlete running left, compose the shot with him on the far right side of the frame. That way, he visually has room to run). This simple compositional trick will make a big difference on the impact of the final image.

Chapter Six. Shooting People Like a Pro

Tips for Making People Look Their Very Best

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Now, the subhead above says this chapter is how to make people look their very best, and that is kind of misleading because it's really about making your photos of people look better. If you've got some really ugly looking people in your photos, there's not much you or I can do to help these poor souls. They've been hit with the ugly stick, and they don't make a digital camera that will make these people, who didn't have a date for the prom, suddenly look like Jessica Biel or Matthew McConaughey (who, not coincidentally, were chosen as the Sexiest Woman Alive and Sexiest Man Alive by *People* magazine, just in case you cared). By the way, although I did not make this year's cut, if you read my bio at the beginning of this book, you learned that I was among *People* magazine's top 50 sexiest picks back in 2004. This surprises many people, including my wife, as she has no recollection of this whatsoever, but I'm actually thankful for that because she has also completely erased any memory of my

brief but highly publicized affair with Angelina Jolie while we were filming the movie *Taking Lives* in Toronto. But I digress. Now this chapter isn't so much about studio portrait techniques, because if you're shooting in a studio, then you're a professional photographer and, honestly, this chapter (and this book for that matter) really isn't for you. This is really for getting better outdoor, or candid, or posed shots that are supposed to look candid, but really aren't, but you can tell they are because they're posed. Are you taking all this down?

◀ PREV

NEXT ▶

The Best Lens for Portrait Photography



There are not many aspects of photography that have a specific focal length you should try to shoot with, but luckily portrait photography is one of them. Most pros shoot portraits with a short zoom lens, and one of their favorite focal lengths is the 85-100mm range. In fact, telephoto lenses in the 85-100mm range are often called portrait lenses because they let you shoot from a good working distance (10 to 12 feet from your subject, giving you and your subject some breathing room, while letting you still fill the frame with your subject), but more importantly, shooting with focal lengths between 85mm and 100mm eliminates the unflattering facial distortion wide-angle lenses are notorious for, while avoiding the compression long telephoto lenses give. Some portrait pros swear that the 85mm focal length is the portrait sweet spot, and others swear by 100mm, but that's the kind of thing pros debate in online forums all day long (and you can try both with your zoom lens and choose the one you like best, because they both give a pleasing perspective for portraits), so I won't take up that battle here. (*Note:* Both Nikon and Canon make 28-105mm zooms that are ideal for portraits because you can choose 85mm, 100mm, or anything between the two.) Another reason these short zoom lenses are ideal is because you won't have to pick up your tripod and move it (or your model) each time you need to slightly recompose the shot. So, get yourself a zoom lens that covers the 85-100mm range, and you're good to go. By the way, the lens shown here is a 24-105mm zoom, so this lens would do the trick because with it you can choose any zoom focal length between 85mm and 100mm (the sweet spots for portraits).

Which Aperture to Use



SCOTT KELBY

One thing I love about portrait photography is that a lot of the decisions are made for you (like which lens/focal length to use), so you can focus on the harder parts of portrait photography ensuring that you have great light and capturing the personality of your subject. So, now that you know which lens to use, believe it or not (and this is very rare), there is a special aperture (f-stop) that seems to work best for most portrait photography. When it comes to portraits, f/11 is the ticket because it provides great sharpness and depth on the face (and isn't that what portraits are all about?), which gives you a great overall look for most portrait photography (now, I say "most" because there are some artistic reasons why you might want to try a different aperture if you're trying to get a special effect, but for the most part you can choose aperture priority mode, set your aperture at f/11, and then worry about the really important stuff the lighting, capturing your subject's personality, how much to bill your client, etc.).

Using Seamless Backgrounds



©ISTOCKPHOTO/TOBIAS LAUCHENAUER

Backgrounds provide quite a challenge for portrait photographers because they generally get in the way of the portrait photographer's goal capturing the personality, the drama, the soul (if you will) of the person they're shooting. That's why so many portrait photographers shoot their subjects on as plain a background as possible. In the studio, perhaps the least expensive option is to use a seamless background—these are very inexpensive because they're made of paper. That's right, it's just a big giant roll of paper, and a standard size (53"x36") will only run you about \$25. That ain't bad for a professional studio background (you can find these backgrounds at your local camera store). Some photographers tape it to the wall, others nail it to the wall, but the best option is probably to buy an inexpensive stand that holds the roll up for you (you can get a decent one for around \$70). Now, which colors should you use? For starters, stick with black (for dramatic portraits) or white (for everything else). The nice thing about a white seamless background is that it usually appears as a shade of gray. To make it really appear white like the one above, you'll have to aim one or more lights at the background or the light from your flashes will fall enough, giving you a gray background. Gray is not a bad background color (in fact, it's very popular), but if you're really going for white, make sure to position one or two lights behind your subject, aiming at the background itself. If you go with a black seamless background, you may need an extra light to backlight your subject (especially if they have dark hair), so they stand out against the black.

Using Canvas or Muslin Backgrounds



©ISTOCKPHOTO/FLOYD ANDERSON

Canvas or muslin backgrounds aren't quite as cheap or mean as inexpensive seamless rolls, but they're inexpensive enough that you should consider using one as a formal background, as well (a decent canvas background only runs around \$120). These backgrounds are seamless too, and I'd recommend buying one (at least to start) that's kind of neutral, like one that's mostly gray or mostly brown. These backgrounds add texture to your photo without distracting from the subject, and they're very popular for use in everything from formal business portraits to engagement photos. Again, an inexpensive stand will pay for itself in no time (they start at around \$70), and you'll be amazed at how quickly you can change the look of your background by repositioning your lighting.

The Right Background Outdoors



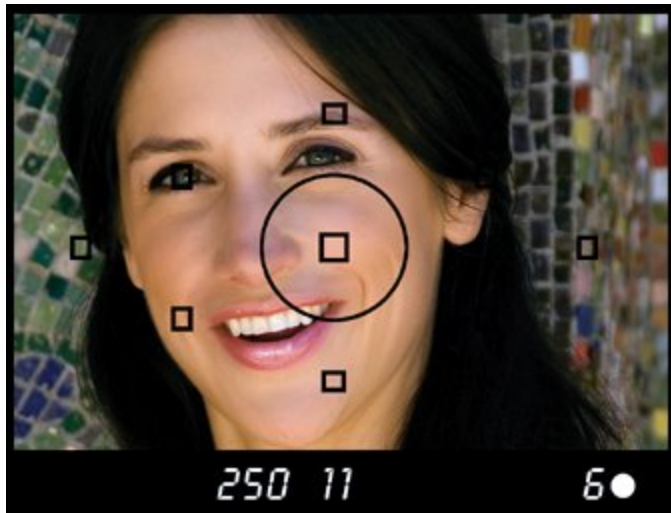
SCOTT KELBY

When shooting portraits outdoors, you're not going to be able to use a muslin background or seamless paper (did I even have to say that?), and because of that you have to think about your background even more. The background rule for shooting portraits outdoors is to keep the background as simple as possible. The simpler the background, the stronger your portrait will be, so position your subject where the least possible amount of activity is going on behind them. Here's where you might want to break the f/11 rule, so you can throw the background out of focus by using an aperture like f/2.8 or f/4 with the portrait focal length you like best. Remember, when it comes to portrait backgrounds outdoors, less is more.

The Background Lighting Rule

When it comes to backgrounds, there's another simple rule you can follow that will keep you out of trouble. When you're choosing a simple background to shoot on, make sure your background is no brighter than your subject (in fact, darker is better because a dark subject on a bright background rarely works).

Where to Focus



SCOTT KELBY

Over the years, there have been conflicting thoughts as to where the optimal place is to focus your camera when shooting portraits (the cheek, the tip of the nose, the hairline, etc.). Luckily, today the consensus is fairly clear (you'll still find some cheek holdouts here and there, but don't let them throw you): focus directly on the subject's eyes. By shooting at $f/11$ and focusing on the eyes, this will give you a nice level of sharpness throughout the face (and most importantly, the eyes will be tack sharp, and in portraits that is absolutely critical).

Where to Position Your Camera



JOEY LIPOVETSKY

Portraits generally look best when you position your camera at the subject's eye level, so set your tripod up so you're shooting level with their eyes. This is particularly important when shooting children—don't shoot down on children (just like you don't shoot down on flowers), or you'll wind up with some very disappointing shots. So, with kids, you're either going to raise them up to your eye level (on a tall seat) or you're going to lower your tripod down to their eye level and shoot on your knees (I know the indignities we have to suffer for our craft and all that...). Also, now that you're at the right height, about how far back should you position your tripod from your subject? Your focal length will pretty much dictate that for you, but if you're about 8 to 10 feet from your subject you'll be in good shape.

Positioning Your Subject in the Frame



SCOTT KELBY

If you're shooting portraits outdoors, especially candid portraits or editorial style shots, there's a rule that many pros use about where to position the subject's eyes in the frame. Position them 1/3 of the way down from the top of the frame. This is another one of those tricks that gives your portraits more visual interest, and it's easy enough to do since you just compose the shot so your subject's eyes are 1/3 of the way down from the top.

Tip for Framing Portraits



SCOTT KELBY

If you're looking for another tip for great portrait shots, try zooming in close so your subject's face fills the entire frame. Also try zooming in close enough so that either the top of the head or the sides (the ears) actually extend outside the frame.

Getting Great Light Outdoors



SCOTT KELBY

Although there's plenty of light for shooting portraits outdoors in the middle of the day, most of that light is very direct and will wind up casting hard, unflattering shadows on your subject's face (not to mention that your subject will usually be squinting, sweating, or both). So, how do you get great outdoor portraits at two o'clock in the afternoon? It's easy: move your subject into the shade, where the light is softer, and the shadows are less prominent and much softer. Now, don't move into a cave—just move to a shady area near the direct sunlight (typical places include under a large tree, under the overhang of a building or house, on the porch of a house, under an umbrella, etc.). Just find a place you'd normally go to get out of the sun on a hot day, and you're ready to get portraits where your subject isn't squinting, and the light is soft and flattering. The photos above perfectly demonstrate the advantage of doing this. The shot on the left was taken in direct sunlight and the shot on the right, of the same model in a similar pose, was taken one minute later less than 30 feet away but in open shade. Notice how much softer and warmer the light is, how vibrant the color is, and how much better the same model looks. All I did was move her into the shade. It makes that big a difference.

Getting Great Light Indoors



SCOTT KELBY

What's the pros' trick for getting great portrait light indoors without setting up some extensive studio lighting? Use the best light ever created: natural light. This is such wonderful light that many pros insist on using nothing but natural light for their portraits. To take advantage of this wonderful light source, just position your subject beside a window in your house, office, studio, etc., that doesn't get direct light. The most ideal window light is a north-facing window, but any window getting nice, soft, non-direct sunlight will work. If the window is dirty, that's even better because it helps diffuse the light and makes it even softer. If the only window you have gets direct light, try using sheers (thin curtains that are almost see-through; you find these in hotel rooms quite often, and they make great light diffusers). You can position your subject standing or sitting, but to keep the light from looking flat, make sure your subject is getting side light from the window, not direct light. The soft shadows on the other side of the face will enhance the portrait and give it depth and interest.

Don't Forget the Shower Curtain Trick

That's it: don't forget the frosted shower curtain trick you learned in [Chapter 2](#). It can work wonderfully well here too, and although your subject may think you're a little lame for pinning up a frosted shower curtain, the people who look at their portrait will only think, "What soft, magical lighting; your photographer must be a genius" (or something along those lines).

Taking Great Photos of Newborn Babies



SCOTT KELBY

By now you've probably heard how hard it is to photograph babies. That may be true, but newborn babies usually have a distinct advantage—they're asleep. That's right, newborns spend most of their days sleeping, so getting great shots of them is easier than you'd think, but you have to put them in the right setting or everyone who looks at the photos will say something along the lines of, "Aw, too bad she was asleep." Generally, people like babies to be wide awake and smiling in photos, but there's a very popular brand of newborn photography where the baby and mom (or dad) are sharing a quiet moment, and it really sets the stage for a touching portrait. I saw this first-hand when David Ziser (the world-class wedding and portrait photographer) spent one evening photographing my newborn daughter, Kira. Now, David had a huge advantage because my daughter just happens to be the cutest little baby in the whole wide world, but he did stack the deck in his favor with a simple, but extremely effective, technique—he had my wife and I both wear long-sleeved black turtleneck shirts (you can find these at Target). Then, he photographed Kira as my wife held her in her arms (I took a turn as well). David shot very tight (zoomed in), so what you basically got was a sweet little baby resting peacefully in her mother's (and father's) arms. You can use a diffused flash (more on this in [Chapter 3](#)), or you can use soft natural light from a side window.

Great Sunset Portraits



©ISTOCKPHOTO/KEVIN RUSS

Everyone wants to shoot portraits at sunset because the sky is so gorgeous, but the problem generally is that (a) your subject either comes out as a silhouette because the sunset is behind them, or (b) you use a flash and your subject looks washed out. Here's how to get great portraits at sunset without washing out your subject: start by turning off your flash and aim at the sky. Then hold your shutter button halfway down to take an exposure reading from the sky, and while still holding the shutter button halfway down (or you can turn on the exposure lock button on your digital camera), recompose the shot by aiming at your subject, but now turn the flash on and reveal your subject with the light of the flash. This way, your subject gets fill flash, but the sky behind them still looks great. It's an old trick, but it's still around because it works so well.

Better Natural-Light Portraits with Reflectors



SCOTT KELBY

If you're going to be shooting portraits using glorious, wonderful natural light, there's something you probably ought to pick up that will make your portraits that much better (preferably two) collapsible reflectors (I choose collapsible reflectors because they take up virtually no storage space when you're not using them). These aren't just for big-time pros because they just don't cost that much, but they do wonders for opening up the shadows in your portraits and making the most of that marvelous natural light. You simply use these to reflect (or bounce) the natural light from the window back into the shadow areas in your subject.

I use the Photoflex 22" circular collapsible reflectors with gold on one side (if you want the light you reflect to look warmer) and silver on the other side (for a cooler reflected light). They sell for around \$37 each. I told you they didn't cost much, but the results are golden (or silver, as the case may be).

Chapter Seven. Avoiding Problems Like a Pro

How to Avoid Digital Headaches

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Pros are out shooting every day. And when I say out, if they're studio photographers they're actually usually shooting indoors, so in that case, of course I mean they're out shooting in the studio. Stick with me here, will ya? Anyway, these pros are out shooting every day, while most of the rest of us only get to shoot when our wives let us. I mean, we only get to shoot on certain occasions (like when our wives are out of town), so although we run across digital problems when we're shooting, since we won't have to deal with them again until our wives fly to Minnesota to visit their parents, we just let them slide. The pros don't because they have to deal with these things every day (meaning their in-laws live in the same town they do), so the way they keep from having migraine headaches the size of the Shuttle's booster rockets is by figuring out clever ways to deal with them on the spot. So, this chapter is kind of a shortcut because you're going to get the benefits of years of other

people's headaches, but you're going to get to fix them right now, sidestepping one of the real downsides of shooting digital, and that primarily is having to shoot your cousin Earl's wedding (see, you should have listened to your wife when she told you not to get that long lens). Now, you may have noticed that I've been referring to wives as if all photographers were men, and clearly that's not the case. It's just that I am a man (a masculine, mannish, manly man) and therefore it would be silly for me to say, "My husband didn't want me to go shooting that day," when you know darn well he wouldn't mind. Waitthat's not what I meant.

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Pro Tips to Avoid White Balance Problems



White balance problems often happen when you shoot indoors under fluorescent, incandescent, or just "them regular ol' light bulbs." Of course, you don't generally find out about them until you open the photos later on your computer and all the shots have either a yellowish, or greenish, or blueish color cast. By default, your camera is set to Auto White Balance, which works pretty well outdoors, but generally doesn't work worth a darn indoors. The pros use three methods to avoid white balance problems when they shoot: (1) they go into the camera and choose a preset white balance setting that matches the lighting they're shooting in (it's easier than you think just go to your camera's white balance section, and choose either Incandescent [for regular indoor lighting] or Fluorescent [for typical office lighting]). You can choose preset white balance settings for outdoor shots as well, and you'll get more realistic colors there too. (2) They create a custom white balance. Luckily, your camera will do most of the work for you if you just put a neutral gray card (you can find these at any camera store or B&H Photo) about 8 to 10 inches in front of your lens, and zoom in/out so the card fills your frame. Then go to your camera's custom white balance menu and set it up to measure what it sees to create a custom white balance (it's easier than it sounds just take a peek in your camera's manual). And, (3) They shoot in RAW format, so they don't worry about white balance, because they can choose the white balance after the fact, either in Adobe Photoshop's Camera Raw dialog or in their RAW processing software (if they don't use Photoshop's RAW processor). This is just one advantage of shooting in RAW (see [Chapter 10](#) for more on why RAW rocks).

Cold Weather Shooting Means Extra Batteries



Another thing the pros have learned is that digital camera batteries don't last nearly as long in cold weather. So if you're going out shooting in the snow, you'd better bring at least one or two backup batteries for your camera or it could turn into a very short shoot.

Extra Batteries Are a Shoot Saver

I go out of my way to avoid using flash (I'm one of those natural light freaks), so my batteries last a good long time, and I seldom have to change batteries during a shoot. However, I have at least one backup battery for both of my cameras, and although I don't use them that often, when I have needed them, they've been a shoot saver big time. If there's a must-have accessory, it's an extra battery.

Don't Change Lenses in Dusty Weather



SCOTT KELBY

If you're shooting outdoors, take a tip from the pros and don't change lenses if you're in a dusty environment. That's the last thing you want getting down inside your digital camera, and although you can't sometimes see the dust swirling around you, your camera's sensors will see it, and then so will you (when you open the photos on your computer). If you must change lenses, try to go back to your car, or some indoor location, and switch lenses there. Remember, it doesn't take a whole lotta dust to make your camera really miserable—it's worth the extra effort to either plan carefully for shoots in desert or sandy conditions and go with just one lens, or to keep your car nearby so you can go inside, shut the door, and change the lens without fear of fouling your gear.

Protect Your Gear Tip

You can buy protective gear for your camera for shooting in harsh or rainy weather conditions. But, if you find yourself in that kind of situation without that protection, you can do what my buddy Bill Fortney does and take a clear plastic shower cap from the hotel you're staying at, and use it to cover your camera and lens. It balls up right in your pocket, and it does a better job than you'd think.

Apply for Permits to Shoot with Your Tripod

[\[View full size image\]](#)

The image shows a form titled "Application for Permission to Use a Tripod". The form is for requesting permission to use a tripod in the Museum. It includes sections for general information, intended use, and proposed location(s) and date(s). The form is tilted slightly to the right.

Application for Permission to Use a Tripod

In order to request permission to use a tripod in the Museum, please complete the following information and submit this application to one of the Information Desks.

1. General Information

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Affiliation: _____

2. Intended Use

Do you intend to use the tripod in connection with still photography for personal, non-commercial use only? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If no, please explain: _____

3. Proposed Location(s) and Date(s)

A. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

B. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

C. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

D. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

E. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

F. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

G. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

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I. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

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K. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

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M. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

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O. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

P. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

Q. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

R. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

S. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

T. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

U. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

V. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

W. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

X. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

Y. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

Z. In which gallery(ies) do you propose to use a tripod? _____

Many indoor locations (including museums, aquariums, public buildings, etc.) don't allow you to shoot on a tripod, even though these locations generally have very low "museum-like" lighting. However, in some cases you can apply for a free permit to shoot on a tripod such as the one shown above from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art. You just have to ask in advance. I've had a number of instances where, by asking in advance, they would let me come in before or after hours to shoot when nobody's there (alleviating their fear that someone might trip on my tripod and sue them). Sometimes government buildings or museums will let you apply for a permit so you can shoot during their regular open hours, but often they'll have you come before or after hours, which I actually prefer. So, usually it's just me and a security guard shooting at five o'clock in the morning or nine o'clock at night, but at least I've got a stable shooting platform, I'm getting sharp shots because I'm on a tripod, and I don't have to worry about anyone tripping over my tripod, shooting their flash while I'm trying to shoot, or rushing me to get out of the way.

Be Careful What You Shoot



©ISTOCKPHOTO/NANCY LOUIE

Especially since September 11th in the U.S., people can sometimes get freaky when they see someone shooting photos outside their building (which is common in downtown areas), and they're particularly touchy outside state and federal buildings. Recently, a photographer I know was shooting in a downtown area, and when he pulled his eye away from his viewfinder he was surrounded by three security guards. He didn't realize the building he was shooting was a federal building (it just looked like a fascinating old building to him), and the guards wanted to confiscate his camera's memory card. Luckily, he was able to convince the guards to let him just delete the photos from his card right in front of them, but if he hadn't, the police would have been involved within minutes (it was a federal building, after all). However, building security for corporations can be very aggressive as well (I've heard stories there, too), so just take a little care when shooting in downtown areas and be prepared to delete shots off your card if necessary. Also, as a general rule, in the U.S. and in other countries, you're taking your chances any time you shoot government buildings, airports, military bases, terrorist training camps, nuclear missile silos, Russian sub bases, etc.

A Tip for Shooting on an Incline



RANDY HUFFORD

If you find yourself shooting on an incline with your tripod, here's a tip that can save your camera from instant death. Let's say you're shooting on a rock or on the side of a hill. Your tripod has three legs, with only one facing you. That way, if the camera starts to tip back, the single leg acts like an anchor and keeps it from falling. If the two-legged side is on the ground, with a single leg on the rock or hillside, your camera will topple right over.

Tip for More Stable Shooting on a Tripod

When you're shooting on a tripod, depending on the terrain, you don't always wind up extending your tripod's legs all the way. Sometimes you just extend one set of legs and not both. If that's the case, the pros extend the top ones (the legs nearest the camera) first, because they're thicker and provide more stability and balance than the thinner lower legs.

The Other Reason Pros Use a Lens Hood



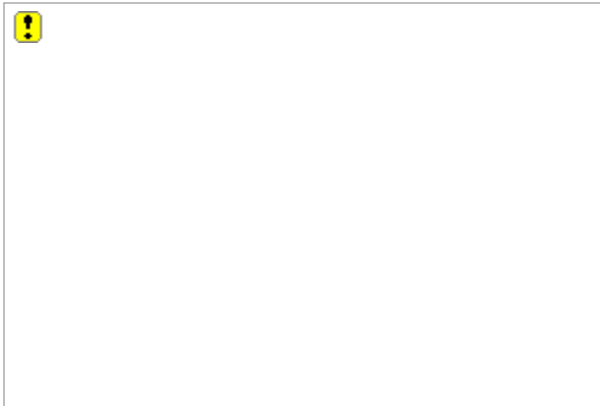
The lens hood that comes with most good-quality lenses these days is designed to reduce or eliminate the lens flare that can creep into your lens when shooting outdoors in daylight, but pros keep a lens hood on even indoors (basically they keep it on all the time) for another reason—it protects the lens. Think about it: the glass end of your lens is pretty much flush to the end of the lens barrel, and if it comes in contact with anything that's not really, really soft, it can get scratched, cracked, or just fingerprinted or dirty. However, when you put a lens hood on the end, it puts a buffer between the glass and the scary world around it. It can save your lens if you drop it or knock it into someone or something.

Keeping Your Lens Out of Trouble



If you're going to be using good-quality lenses with your digital camera, then I highly recommend buying a UV filter for each lens. Although the UV part doesn't do all that much (it filters out UV rays to some extent, which makes your photos look better to some small extent), the real reason to use one is to protect your lens (specifically, the glass on your lens, which can get scratched easily or break if you drop it). Although this "buy a UV filter/don't buy one" controversy is heavily debated on the Web, I can tell you from personal experience it saved one of my lenses from certain death. I was out on location, and while changing lenses I somehow lost my grip and my lens crashed to the ground, glass first. My filter was severely damaged, but once I unscrewed it and took a look at my lens, it was totally unscathed. The filter took all the damage, and it's *much* cheaper to buy a new filter than it is to replace an expensive lens. So, while a UV filter might not do all that much for your photos, it does a lot for your peace of mind.

Back Up Your Photos in the Field



When you're out shooting, as soon as you fill up a memory card, back it up to a portable external hard drive (ideally, you'd like a portable drive that lets you pop in your memory card and copy it onto the drive without having to be connected to a computer). That way, you've backed up your digital negatives right there on the spot. Here's how I use this workflow: let's say I do an early morning shoot (the 5:00 a.m. sort). As soon as I'm done with my shoot (around 7:00 a.m.), when I get back to my car, I pop my memory card out of the camera, pop it into my Epson P-4000, and start copying the card over. Then, while it's still copying, I put the P-4000 back into its carrying case, and then back into my camera bag. By the time I get to the breakfast restaurant (a yummy breakfast is a critical part of the early morning shoot), the photos are copied onto the hard drive. Right after I place my breakfast order with the server, I break out my P-4000 and start seeing if the morning shoot yielded any "keepers" in the P-4000's huge LCD window. That way, not only do I have a solid backup, but I also get a preview of how my morning shoot went.

Limit Your LCD Time to Save Battery Life



One of the biggest drains on battery life is the color LCD monitor on the back of your digital camera. Although it's a very important part of digital photography, using it too often can really drain your battery, but here's something that can help lower the number of seconds that your LCD displays right after you take the shot. After all, if you need to see a shot you just took again, you can just press the playback button on the back of your camera and it will reappear. Also, limit your chimping (admiring your photos on the LCD monitor or showing them off to others while making "Oooh! Oooh!" sounds).

Be Careful When Throwing Out CDs/DVDs



Be careful when throwing away old CDs or DVDs with photos on them. One thing the pros have learned (some the hard way) is that if you just throw a CD or DVD of photos away, there's a chance those photos might "come back from the grave" and reappear where you least expect them, like on the Web, or on a stock photo site, or...wherever. These days, old CDs often attract unwelcome attention in a landfill because trollers are looking for credit card numbers, personal information, etc., and if they find anything of value (including your photos), they may find a way to use (or abuse) them. How do you protect yourself against this? Buy a serious shredderone that will shred CDs/DVDs (like the Fellowes PC70-2CD, which will shred just about anything on earth)and shred your CDs so they're unusable by just about anybody. It doesn't seem like a big threat until you see someone else selling your work.

Bracket If You're Not Sure About Exposure



In a tricky lighting situation, or a situation where you've just got to get the correct exposure for the shot, the pros make use of the camera's built-in exposure bracketing feature. This basically sets up your camera to shoot multiple versions (as many as five, if you like) of your current scene using different exposures (some lighter, some darker) with the idea that one of them will be just right. It starts by using the suggested exposure reading taken by your camera (which your camera believes is the correct exposure, by the way, but it can sometimes be fooled in tricky lighting situations), then it creates another image that is slightly underexposed, and another slightly overexposed (so you've bracketed both ends of the original exposure). This greatly increases your odds of getting the perfect exposure, and since digital film is freehey, why not, right? You turn on bracketing right on the camera itself. For Nikon digital cameras, there's a bracketing button to the left of the viewfinder (it says "BKT" on the button). On Canons (like the 20D or 30D), you have to turn on bracketing from the menu itself.

Bracketing Tip

If you're shooting in RAW, bracketing becomes much less important because you have so much control after the fact (in your RAW conversion software), and because you can make as many copies, with different exposures, as you'd like.

Avoid Red Eye

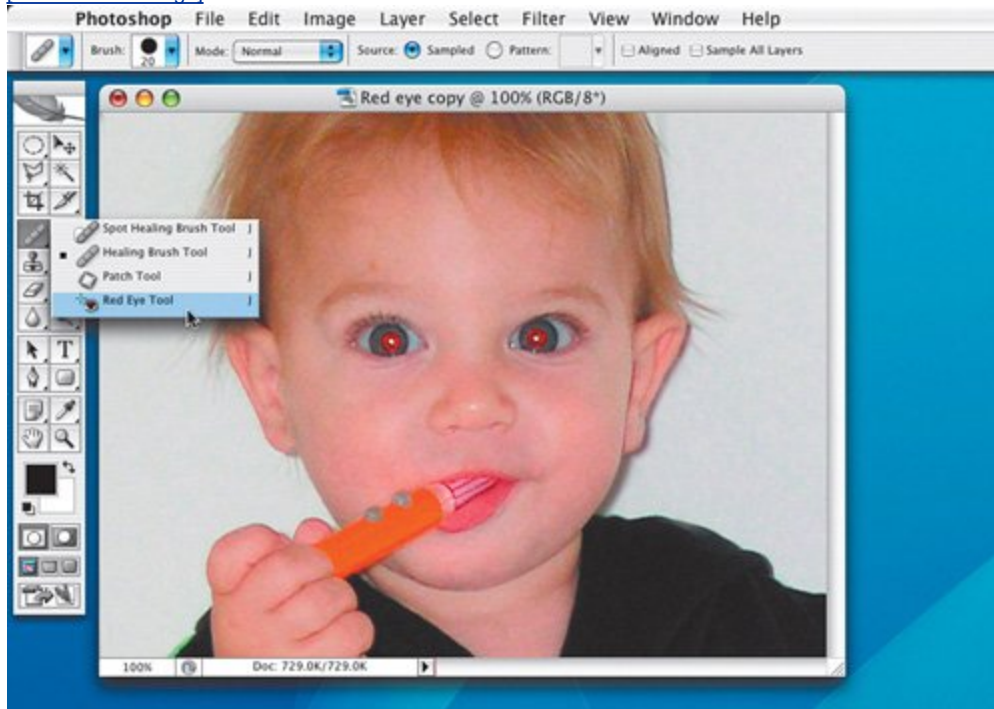


SCOTT KELBY

Without going into all the technical (and physiological) reasons why people in our photos often get "red eye" when we use a flash, let's just look at how to avoid it. The main culprit is your camera's pop-up flash, which sits right above your lens and is an almost automatic recipe for red eye. The easy fix (the one the pros use anyway) is to either get that flash (ideally) off the camera and hold it a couple of feet away from the lens, or at the very least up much higher away from the lens, to reduce the chance for red eye. Another method is to bounce your flash off the ceiling, which is a great cure for red eye. Of course, all of these require you to have a separate external flash unit (and not just your camera's built-in pop-up flash). If you can't spring for an external flash, there are a few other popular strategies when you have no choice but to use your built-in pop-up flash: (1) turn on some room lights, if possible. It lets your subject's pupils contract, and that causes less red eye than shooting in complete darkness. (2) If your camera has a red-eye reduction mode (where it sends a preemptive flash, which causes your subject's pupils to quickly contract, before it fires the main flash), that sometimes reduces red eye. (3) Ask your subject to look slightly away from the lens and that will certainly help, plus (4) moving your camera closer to your subject can also help reduce the dreaded red eye.

Remove Red Eye

[\[View full size image\]](#)



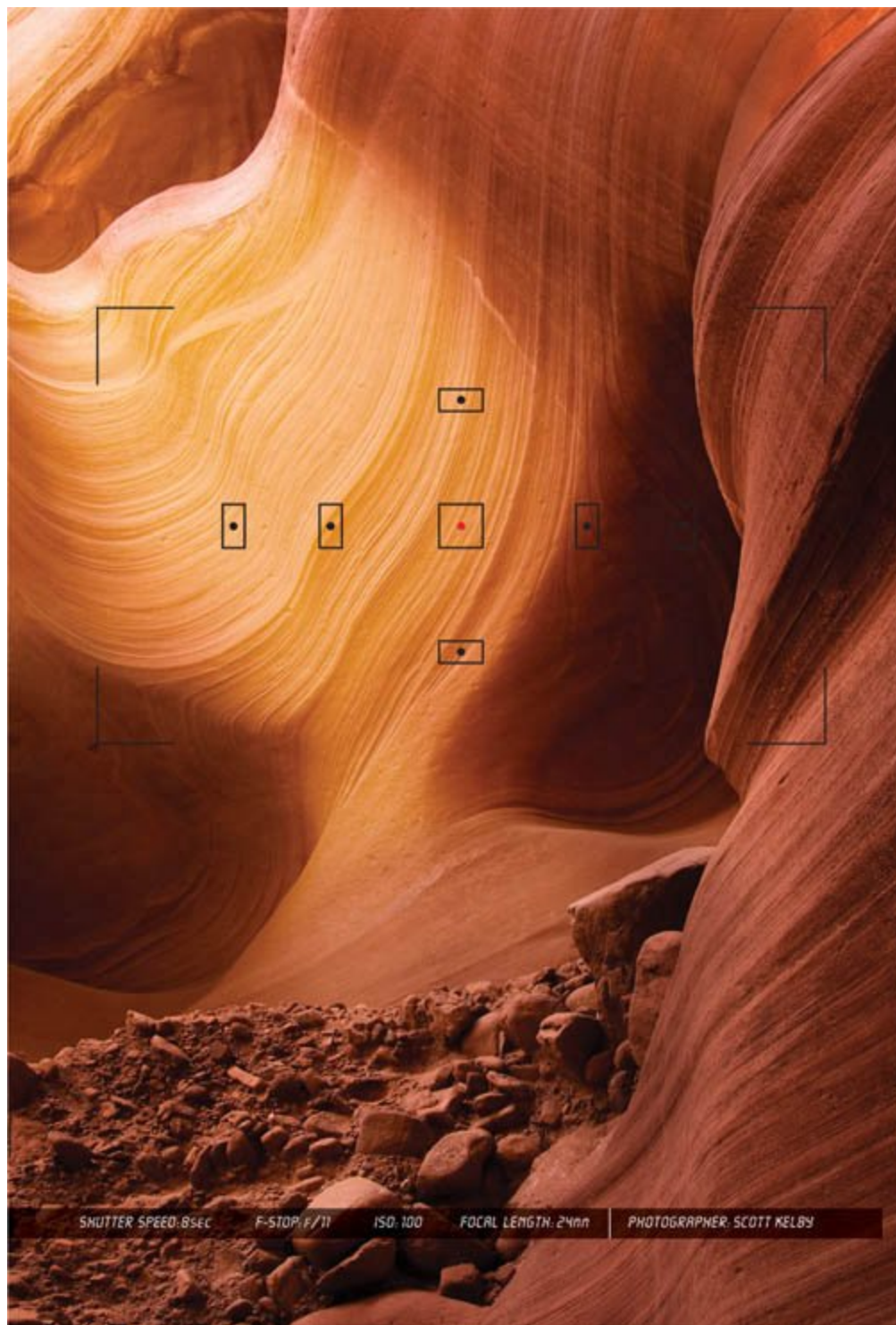
DAVE MOSER

Okay, let's say you forgot to try one of the strategies on the previous page and you wind up with an important photo that has red eye. Luckily, it's easier than ever to get rid of red eye. Whether you're using Adobe Photoshop CS2 or Photoshop Elements (the consumer version of Photoshop), you can use the Red Eye tool to quickly get rid of red eye. Here's how they work. Open the photo in Photoshop CS2 (or Photoshop Elements), then get the Red Eye tool (it's in the Toolbox on the left side), and simply click directly on the red area in one of the eyes. That's it! It does the rest. Then do the other eye. Not too shabby, eh? If clicking directly on the red part of the eye is too hard (the person is standing kind of far away so their eyes are kind of a small target), then just take the tool and click-and-drag a rectangle around the whole eye area, and when you release the mouse button, it will do its thing. Either way you do it, that red eye is going to be gone in seconds. Just another reason why I love Photoshop.

Chapter Eight. Taking Advantage of Digital Like a Pro

It's More Than Just a Replacement for Film

[\[View full size image\]](#)



I added this chapter to the book for a very important reason! I constantly run into people who treat their digital camera like a film camera that comes with free film. These people (freaks) don't realize that digital is much more than just a new type of "free-film camera" and digital cameras offer advantages that we (they, them, us, etc.) never had in film cameras. So, that's what I tried to do in this chapter: show how the pros take advantage of digital cameras to get the most out of their investment. Now, these pros have to squeeze every advantage out of their cameras for two reasons: (1) they have to monetize the results. They paid a lot of money for these tools for their business, and they have to have a verifiable means of tracking their ROI (return on investment). And (2) they have to be able to make enough money to pay both alimony and child support, because their spouses left them shortly after they went digital, because now they spend all their free time playing around

with their photos in Adobe Photoshop. Hey, it's an easy trap to fall into, and I've been known to spend an hour or two in Photoshop myself. But that doesn't mean I've turned my back on my wife and child. I mean, wife and two children. My two boys. I mean, my son and daughter, right? Little what's-her-name? And of course, my son Gerald. Er, Jordan. That's it Jordan. Great little boy, too. What's he now, six? Nine! No kidding, he's nine already? Boy, they sure do grow up fast.

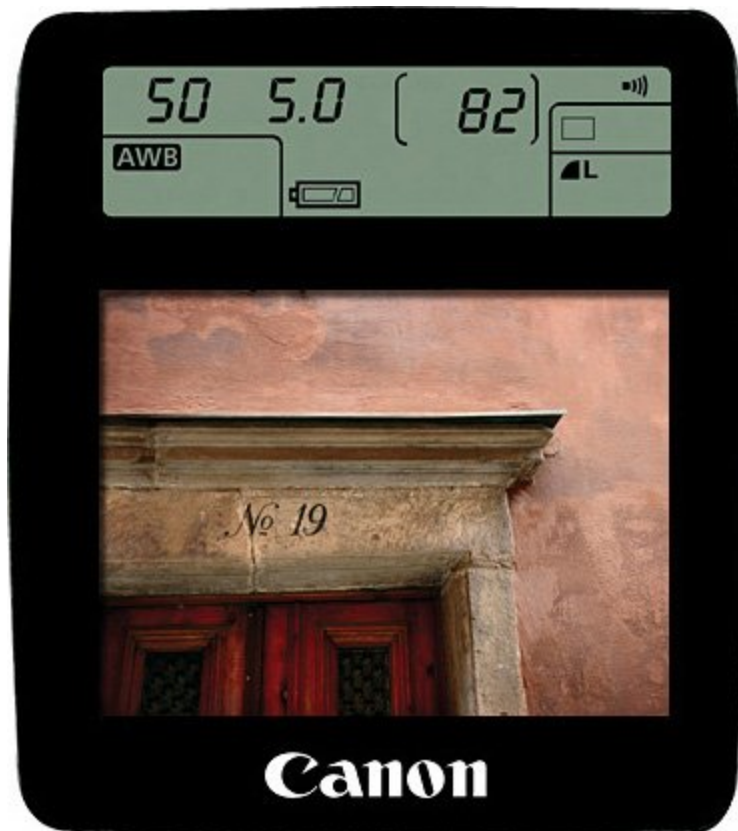
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Level the Playing Field: Press That Button



Will digital photography really get you better photos? Absolutely. There are two huge advantages digital brings (if you take advantage of them), so I'm covering both of them on these first two pages. The first is film is free. In the days of traditional film cameras, every time I pressed the shutter, I heard in my head "22¢." Each time I clicked off a shot, it cost me around 22¢. So whenever I considered taking a shot, I would consciously (or subconsciously) think, "Is this shot worth 22¢?" Of course, I wouldn't know for days (when the film came back from the processing lab), but it always made me pause. Now I can push the shutter again and again and again, and in my head I just see a smiley face instead. Why? Because I'm insane. But besides that, it's because once you've bought your memory card, film is free. This really levels the playing field with professional photographers, because this has always been a huge advantage they had over the amateurs. The pros had a budget for film, so if they were shooting a portrait, they'd shoot literally hundreds of photos to get "the shot." Amateurs would shoot, maybe, a roll of 24. Maybe 36. So, here's a pro photographer shooting hundreds of shots vs. an amateur shooting 36. Who had the best chance of getting the shot? Exactly. Now, jump ahead to digital. It's portrait time the pro will shoot hundreds of shots, right? Now, so can you, and it doesn't cost you a dime. When you shoot "with wild abandon" (as my friend Vincent Versace always says), you level the playing field. Your chances of getting "the shot" go way, way up, so fire away.

Put the LCD Monitor to Work



SCOTT KELBY

The second thing that levels the playing field is that now, with the LCD monitor on the back of your camera, you can see if you "got the shot." And by "got the shot," I mean you can tell if your color is in the ballpark, if your subject blinked when the photo was taken, if your flash actually fired that sort of thing (I'm not trying to trivialize them these are huge advantages). But because the LCD monitor is so small, it can also fool you. Everything looks in focus when it's 2" tall on the monitor. When you open that photo later in Photoshop, you might find out that the key shot from your shoot is horribly out of focus (or your camera focused on the wrong object, so the background is in sharp focus, but your subject is blurry). This actually happens quite often because (all together now) everything looks in focus on an LCD monitor. To really take advantage of the LCD monitor for focus, you'll need to zoom in and see if it's really in focus (see page [17](#) for how to zoom in).

The LCD Monitor Challenge

Another way the LCD monitor will make you a better photographer is through instant creative feedback. If you take your shot, look at the LCD, and what you see disappoints you, then it challenges you to come up with something better. It makes you work the shot, try new angles, get more creative, and experiment until you finally see on the monitor what you set out to capture in the first place.

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Edit as You Shoot to Get More Keepers



One of the tricks the pros use to keep an efficient workflow, and to keep from unnecessarily filling up their memory cards, is to edit out the bad shots as they go. If they take a shot and look on the LCD monitor and see that it's grossly underexposed, overexposed, has tons of blinkies, is clearly out of focus, or is just plain badly composed, they delete it right there on the spot. If you do this as well, later, when you download your photos into your computer, you're only looking at shots that actually have a chance of being a keeper. Plus, you can take more shots per card, because the bad ones have been erased to make room for more potential good shots.

The Hidden "Edit as You Go" Advantage

You may think this is silly (at first), but if you edit out all the really bad shots, when you finally do download and start looking at them, you'll feel better as a photographer. That's because you'll be looking at a better group of photos from the very start. The really bad shots have already been deleted, so when you start looking at the day's take, you'll think to yourself, "Hey, these aren't too bad."

Take Advantage of the Blinkies



SCOTT KELBY

I know I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating. Turning on your highlight warning (or highlight alert, the strobe-like flashing you see on your LCD monitor which shows the parts of your photo that are totally blown out and have no detail) and looking for the "blinkies" will yield you more keepers no doubt. So, what do you do when you see the blinkies? Use your camera's exposure compensation control to back down the exposure a 1/3 stop and shoot the same photo again. If you still see the blinkies, take it down another 1/3 stop and shoot it again. Keep shooting until the blinkies go away. *Note:* Some things will always have blinkies like the sun and that's okay. What you want to be concerned about is specifically "blinkies that matter" (blinkies in parts of the photo that you care about). A reflection of the sun on the chrome bumper of a car is an okay situation to let blinkies live. However, blinkies blinking on the forehead of your subject is not acceptable. Also, when looking at the LCD monitor, keep an eye on the overall exposure of the photo don't let it get way underexposed just to stop a tiny blinky somewhere. Here's how to adjust using exposure compensation:

Nikon: Press the exposure compensation button just behind the shutter button, then move the command dial to the left until it reads 1/3 in the viewfinder readout.

Canon: Turn the mode dial to any creative zone mode except manual, then set the exposure compensation by turning the quick control dial on the back of the camera.

Change Your ISO on the Fly



A huge advantage of digital is that you can change the ISO anytime the scene dictates it. With traditional film, that was impossible. Well, it wasn't impossible, it was just incredibly expensive, because to change the ISO (film speed) you actually had to change film. So, for example, let's say you're shooting the outside of a church with a brand new roll of ISO 200 film (36 exposures), and you crank out four or five shots. You walk inside, and it's very dark, and they won't allow you to set up a tripod (which isn't unusual for a church). If you needed to switch to ISO 800 film, you'd need to pop out the 36-exposure roll (basically sacrificing 31 unexposed shots to the film gods), as you pop in a new roll of ISO 800. So you crank off 17 shots, and then you're back outside. Whoopsyou've got ISO 800 film in, and it's a sunshiny day. Time to switch film again (and sacrifice 19 more shots). See where this is going? But with digital, you can take advantage of on-the-fly ISO switching. You shoot at ISO 200 outside, then walk inside, change the ISO on your camera to 800, and crank out a few more. Maybe try a few at ISO 400 to see if you can get away with it. Maybe a few shots at 1600 just for kicks, then you walk out the door and change the ISO back to 200. All without ever changing film (because, after all, there is no filmwe're digital). Take advantage of this power to shoot hand-held in low-light situations where a tripod is off limits. For the least noise possible, we try to shoot at the lowest ISO possible, but when the right situation presents itself, take advantage of this big digital advantage to "get the shot."

No Penalty Fee for Experimenting



SCOTT KELBY

In the days of traditional film, the only people who could really afford to experiment were pros (or wealthy amateurs), because both the film and processing cost money, and experimenting was just that taking a chance with money. Now, with digital, not only can you see the results of your experiment instantly (on your LCD monitor), but you can see the full-size results on your computer, and best of all it doesn't cost a dime. Got a crazy idea? Try it. Want to shoot a subject from a really wild angle? Do it. Want to try something that's never been done before? Go for it. Now there's nothing holding you back from trying something new (except, of course, the intense humiliation that comes with experiencing utter and complete failure, but there's nothing digital can do to help you deal with that. Well, not yet anyway).

Don't Cram Too Much on One Card



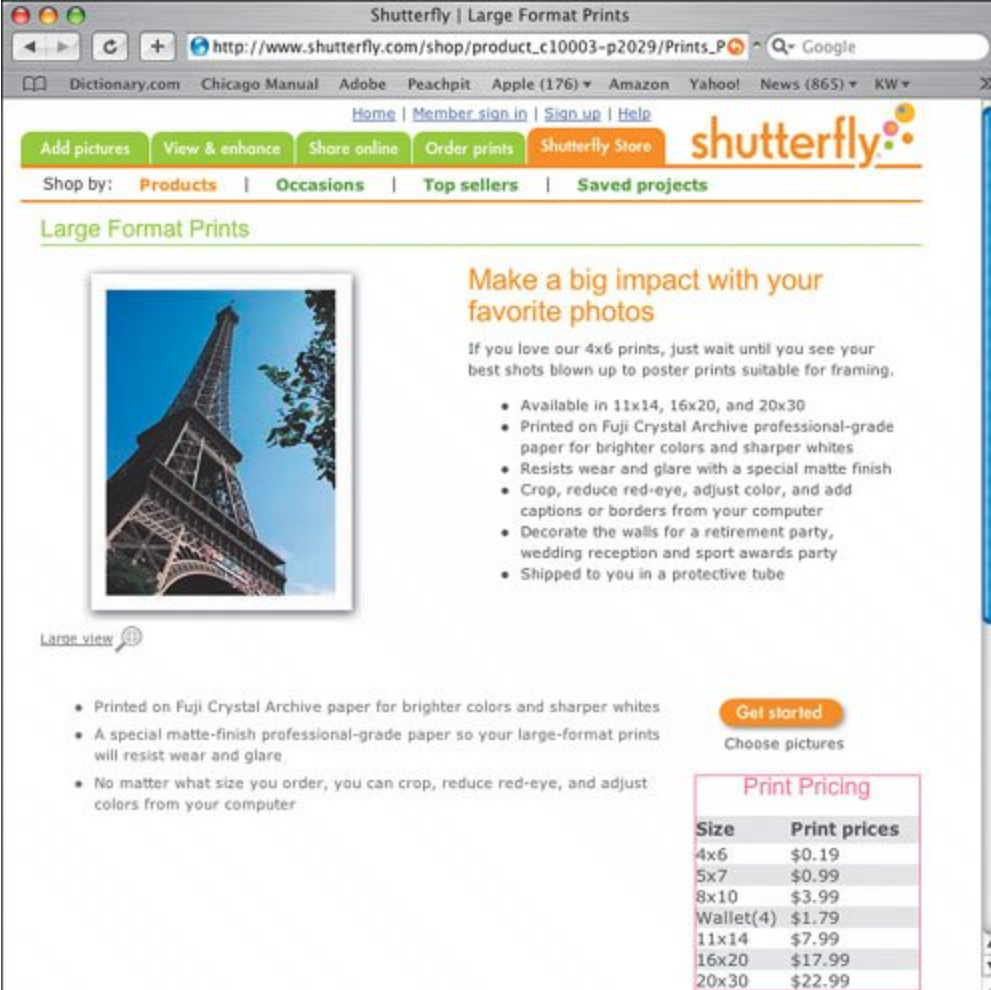
One thing a lot of pros do to help avoid disaster is to not try to cram all their photos on one huge memory card, especially when shooting for a paying client. Here's why: Let's say you're shooting a wedding and you want to capture everything on one 8-GB card, so you don't have to switch cards. That's cool, as long as the card doesn't go bad (but sadly my friend, cards do go bad not often, but it happens. It's a sobering fact of digital photography, but remember that traditional film can go bad as well there is no "never fails" film). So, if you get back to your studio and find that your 8-gig card took a fatal dive, every photo from that wedding may be gone forever. You might as well just sit by the phone and wait for their lawyer to call. That's why many pros avoid the huge-capacity cards, and instead of using one huge 8-GB card, they use four 2-GB cards. That way, if the unthinkable happens, they only lose one card, and just one set of photos. With any luck, you can save the job with the 6 GB of photos you have on the other three cards, and avoid a really harrowing conversation with "the attorney representing the bride and groom."

Shooting RAW? Leave a Little Room on That Memory Card

A word of warning: If you're shooting in RAW format, don't use up every shot on your memory card (leave one or two unshot) because you could potentially corrupt the entire card and lose all your shots. It happens because some RAW shots take more room on the card than others, but your camera calculates how many shots are left based on an average size, not actual size. So, don't chance it. Leave one or two unshot.

Take Advantage of Poster-Sized Printing

[\[View full size image\]](#)



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- Printed on Fuji Crystal Archive professional-grade paper for brighter colors and sharper whites
- Resists wear and glare with a special matte finish
- Crop, reduce red-eye, adjust color, and add captions or borders from your computer
- Decorate the walls for a retirement party, wedding reception and sport awards party
- Shipped to you in a protective tube

Large view

- Printed on Fuji Crystal Archive paper for brighter colors and sharper whites
- A special matte-finish professional-grade paper so your large-format prints will resist wear and glare
- No matter what size you order, you can crop, reduce red-eye, and adjust colors from your computer

Get started
Choose pictures

Size	Print prices
4x6	\$0.19
5x7	\$0.99
8x10	\$3.99
Wallet(4)	\$1.79
11x14	\$7.99
16x20	\$17.99
20x30	\$22.99

You don't have to have a large-format printer to output large-format prints, because today there are loads of professional, reputable color labs that will print stunning, full-color, poster-sized prints (16x20", 20x30", etc.) for much less than you'd think. In fact, you can use some of the online services and upload your digital image, and they output and ship right to your door crisp, wonderful 20x30" poster-sized prints for as little as \$23. That's just incredible. They do all the work, and before you know it, you're holding some amazingly large prints at amazingly low prices. By the way, the process is so much easier than most people think, and once you do one, you'll get hooked. So will your clients.

Where to "Go Big!"

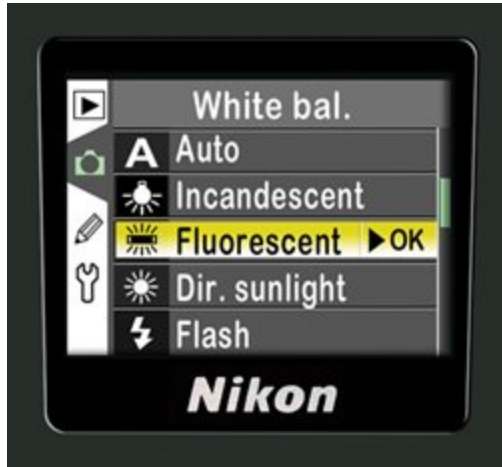
Here are a couple of services that I use for large-format prints:

- Shutterfly.com (one of the biggest and the best)
- Kodak (big prints from a trusted name)

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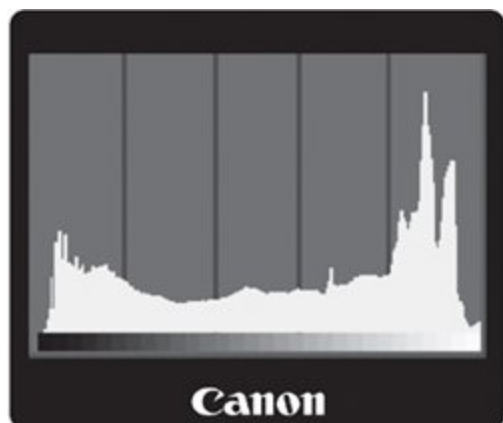
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You Can Make One Film Fit All



Here's another advantage digital has over traditional film, and if you take advantage of it, you'll save yourself loads of time later in Photoshop, and that is to set the right white balance. In the old days, with traditional film, if you ran into a problem lighting situation (like shooting under indoor fluorescent lights in an office or retail environment), you had to either switch to film that was balanced for shooting under fluorescent light or you had to add a special filter to your lens to off set the color cast created by those lights. Even though today's digital cameras let you choose a preset white balance for the lighting you're shooting in, most amateurs just leave their cameras set to Auto White Balance because it's easier. But the pros know that although they can fix it later in Photoshop, it's easier for them to get the shot right by changing just one little setting.

Is It Better to Underexpose or Overexpose?



There have been some theories bouncing around a few of the photography forums on the Web that claim that you should underexpose by a stop for digital photography. First off, let me say this: your goal (my goal, our common goal) is to get the proper exposure. That's our goal. Always. But if that's not possible, if given a choice between overexposing (a photo that's a bit too light) and underexposing (a photo that's a bit too dark), go with overexposing you'll have less noise. That's because noise is most prevalent in the shadows, and if you have to lighten an underexposed photo, in Photoshop (see tip below) you're lightening (increasing) the noise in the photo. That's why it's better to shoot lighter (overexposed), because darkening a photo doesn't increase noise the way lightening it does. So, if you'd rather have one than the other overexpose (but again, our goal is to do neither. That's why we bought these fancy cameras with their highly advanced metering systems).

What to Use Photoshop For

If you're shooting in RAW, then you're going to use Photoshop to process your RAW photos, but once you leave Camera Raw and you're in the regular part of Photoshop, the idea is to use Photoshop to finish your photos not fix them. You want to spend your Photoshop time being creative and having fun, not fixing things you should have done correctly in the camera.

Keep from Accidentally Erasing Memory Cards



This is a small tip, but one that can save your hide when you're out shooting in the field. If you keep your spare memory cards in a card holder (and for the sake of your cards, I hope you do), there's a simple routine the pros use to keep track of which cards are full and which cards are empty and available for quick use. They turn the full cards backwards in the case (with the labels facing inward), so they can instantly tell which cards are available for use (the ones with the labels visible) and which ones are full. The next time you're shooting in a fast-paced environment (like a wedding shoot or a sporting event), you'll be glad you adopted this system.

Chapter Nine. Taking Travel & City Life Shots Like a Pro

Tips for Urban Shooting

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Ya know what there's not a whole lot of? Professional travel photographers. Ya know why? It's because there are not a whole lot of travel magazines. I mean there's *Condé Nast Traveler*, and *National Geographic Traveler* (one of my personal favorites), and *Travel & Leisure*, and well...I'm sure there are a couple more, but the thing is, there's not like a whole bunch of them. But just because the market's tight for jobs in the professional travel photographer market, that doesn't mean we don't want to take travel and city life shots like we're trying to compete, right? Well, that's what this chapter is all about—tips on beating the living crap out of a couple of those pro travel photographers, so they're in the hospital for a while so we can snag some of their assignments. It's the law of the jungle, and shooting in the jungle sounds like fun, except for the fact that some smug pro travel photographer already has the gig. Or did he just fall (was pushed?) off the side of a mountain in Trinidad

and all his expensive gear went right along with him? What a shame. I wonder who'll cover that assignment to shoot the sand dunes in Namibia? Hey, what the heck I'll do it (see, that's the spirit behind this chapter jumping in and taking over when one of your photographic comrades has a series of unexplained accidents while shooting on location). Hey look, I'm obviously kidding here, and I'm not actually recommending on any level that you learn the techniques in this chapter so you'll be ready for a last-minute pro assignment, but hey accidents do happen, right?

 **PREV**

NEXT 

How to Be Ready for "The Shot"

Nikon



Canon



When you're shooting urban (city) or travel photography, you're looking for "the shot." My buddy Dave calls it "the money shot." You know, that shot where you turn the corner and something fascinating, amazing, or [insert your own adjective here] happens and you just happen to be there with a camera to record it. It happened to me in Barcelona when I walked by an alley and saw a man sitting in the dead center of the alley, facing the alley wall, reading a book. It was an incredibly compelling photo (so much so that many people have asked me if it was posed). So, how do you stay ready to catch a photo that just appears on the scene (or maybe drives by in a car)? You shoot in a mode that lets you concentrate on one thing: getting the shot. That's right, when you're walking the city streets, you shoot in program mode. I know, I know, this goes against all sacred rules of professional photography, except the one that says getting the shot is more important than the mode you shoot it in. So, switch your digital camera's mode dial to program mode (which sets both the aperture and shutter speed for you, without popping up the annoying on-camera flash every two seconds like auto mode does) and get the shot. Now, if you get to a scene that isn't changing for a few minutes, you can always switch back to aperture priority (or manual) mode and take creative control of your shot, but for quickly getting the shot as you roam through the city, there's no more practical mode than program. *Note:* Nikon's program mode has a feature called Flexible Program Mode, which lets you change either the shutter speed or aperture setting while the camera automatically changes the opposite setting to keep the same exposure. If you don't touch either dial, it does all the work for you. Sweet!

Shoot Kids and Old People. It Can't Miss



SCOTT KELBY

The next time you pick up a travel magazine, take a look at what's in the photos they publish. I can save you the trouble. Their travel photos have two main people themes: old people and children. Now, when I say old people, I don't mean people in their late 50s. I mean really old people, and by that I specifically mean old, wrinkly, craggy-looking women whose skin looks like shoe leather, and old, hobbly, crusty men with a cane wearing hats that haven't been washed since the Korean War. As for kids, the younger the better (but skip the babies). As long as you shoot them on uncomplicated, simple backgrounds, kids make incredibly compelling additions to your urban and travel pics (that's why the magazines love them). Also, if you get either age group to pose for you, make sure you spend some time talking with them before you start shooting—it can go a long way toward loosening them up, which will give you more natural looking poses and expressions (plus, they'll probably let you shoot longer after you've built up a little rapport).

What Not to Shoot

Okay, so kids and old people are "in." What's out? Crowd shots. They're just about useless (you won't even put 'em in your own travel album). Shoot an empty street first thing in the morning, or shoot two people together, but skip the crowds.

Hire a Model (It's Cheaper Than You'd Think)



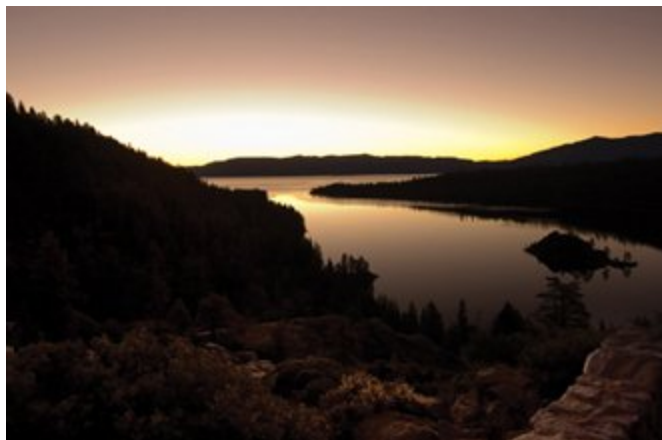
SCOTT KELBY

How do the pros get those amazing shots of people in exotic locales? One of their tricks is to hire a local model (especially if they're shooting to sell the photos to a stock photo agency). Now, before you turn the page because you think hiring a model is out of your budget, it's usually cheaper than you'd think (well, unless you were thinking it's really, really cheap). Here's a real world example: I hired a professional model recently for a shoot out in New Mexico, and the going rate was \$15 per hour, plus I had to provide her prints from the shoot for her portfolio. Some models new to the business will work for free in exchange for you making prints for their portfolio (the term for this in the business is TFP, which stands for "Time For Prints," [they are trading their time for your prints]), so ask your prospective model if they do TFP. If they look at you and ask, "Does that mean Tampa Free Press?" you should probably find another model.

Get That Model Release!

If you've hired a model, make absolutely certain that you get your model to sign a model release, which enables you to use those shots for commercial work. You can find some sample model releases online (I believe the PPA [Professional Photographers of America] has downloadable release forms available for its members), and having one could make all the difference in the world.

What Time to Shoot



SCOTT KELBY

Many pros prefer to shoot urban and travel shots at dawn for a couple of reasons: (1) the light is perfect. That's right, the same golden, magical light that looks great for landscape shots looks great for shooting in the city, too. And (2) the streets are usually empty, so there's little distraction for your architecture shots, cathedral shots, or charming little streets and alleys. You only have a limited time to shoot before the sun gets too light in the sky (and the lighting turns harsh) and the streets start to fill with traffic, so get set up before sunup and, of course, shoot on a tripod. Another great time to shoot is at dusk. The lighting will once again be golden, and the only major downside is that the streets won't be empty. There are still some decent opportunities to shoot urban and people shots during the day, because cities often have lots of open shade (sometimes courtesy of the tall buildings in downtown areas). So unlike the landscape photographer, you can often get away with shooting all day, especially if it's an overcast or cloudy day (remember, if the sky is gray, try to avoid including much sky in your photos). Afternoon is a perfect time to shoot charming doorways (in the shade), windows, kids playing in the park pretty much anything you can find in decent open shade. So, to recap: the best time is probably morning. Second best is dusk, but you can still get away with shooting in open shade during the day, and there's often plenty of it, so fire away (so to speak).

Look for Bold, Vivid Colors



SCOTT KELBY

One of the things to keep an eye out for when you're shooting urban and travel shots are the bold, vivid colors of the city. You'll often find brilliantly colored walls, doors, (shots with a bold-color wall with a contrasting colored door), shops, signs, cars, and bikes. One of my favorite urban shots was of a bright red Vespa scooter parked directly behind a bright yellow Lotus sports car. It almost looked set up for me, and I took dozens of shots of it because the colors were just so vivid, and so perfectly matched. Keep your eyes peeled for brightly painted walls (especially wonderful if you find someone working in front of the wall, or waiting patiently for a bus with the colorful wall in the background, or a bright yellow car parked in front of a bright blue wall). If you're looking for these colorful combinations while you're out exploring, you'll be surprised at how often they'll reveal themselves to you. By the way, I know I'm beating a dead horse here, but these colors will look richer and have more depth in (you guessed it) great light, which generally occurs (you know it) around dawn and dusk. Just remember, the next best thing to those two is open shade.

Shooting Travel? Visit PhotoSecrets.com First

[\[View full size image\]](#)



If you're looking to find the shots everybody else misses (in other words, you don't want shots that are too touristy), before you leave on your trip visit PhotoSecrets.com. This site is a big help because they list, city by city, some of the best locations to get "the shot." Best of all, they give you photo examples of the shots you can take from each location, so you can see before you go if it's the kind of shot you're looking to get. Although the site is primarily to promote their complete list of books on the topic, they do share a number of great shoot locations and photos on the site, so it's definitely worth a look to see if they have some free tips on the city you're heading for.

Don't Try to Capture It All: Shoot the Details



SCOTT KELBY

I've heard a lot of photographers complain about the results of their urban shooting, and much of the time it's because they try to capture too much. What I mean by that is that they try to capture the entirety of a majestic building or the grandeur of a magnificent cathedral, but even with an ultra-wide-angle lens this is very, very hard to pull off. That's why the pros shoot details instead. For example, instead of shooting to capture the entire cathedral at Notre Dame in Paris, instead capture details that suggest the whole: shoot the doors, a window, a spire, a gargoyle, the pigeons gathered on the steps, or an interesting architectural element of the church, rather than trying to capture the entire structure at once. Let your photo suggest the height, or suggest the craftsmanship, and the mind's eye will fill in the blanks. By shooting just the details, you can engage in some very compelling storytelling, where a piece is often stronger than the whole. After all, if you want a photo of the entire cathedral, you can just buy one from the dozen or so gift shops just steps away. Instead, show your impression, your view, and your take on Notre Dame. Give this a try the next time you're out shooting in a city and see if you're not infinitely more pleased with your results.

The Best Shot May Be Just Three Feet Away



SCOTT KELBY

My good friend Bill Fortney said it best, "The biggest impediment to photographers getting great shots is the fact that they don't move. The best shot, the best view, and the best angle is sometimes just 3 feet from where they're standing but they just don't move they walk up, set up, and start shooting." It's so true (that's why I also made reference to this non-moving phenomenon in the landscape chapter). Once you find that fascinating detail, that vividly colored wall, that unique scene walk around. Be on the lookout for other more interesting views of your subject and shoot it from there as well. Besides just moving left and right, you can present a different view by simply changing your shooting height: stand on a chair, squat down, lie on the ground and shoot up, climb up a flight of stairs and shoot down on the scene, etc. Remember, the best shot of your entire trip may be waiting there just 3 feet to your left (or 3 feet up). *Note:* The shot shown above is proof of this concept. It was taken in Morocco. Well, Disney's version of it anyway (at Disney's Epcot Center in Florida). If you were to walk 3 feet to the left (which is the shot I saw first), you'd see an outdoor courtyard full of park visitors eating dinner. But when I stepped 3 feet to the right, it hid the baskets of food and Coca-Cola cups and gave me this more authentic-looking view. By the way, that orange light through the open window is coming from a Disney gift shop. Another few feet to the right, and you'd see some stuffed Mickey Mouse dolls.

Shoot the Signs. You'll Thank Yourself Later



SCOTT KELBY

Want to save yourself from a lot of headaches? When you're out shooting a cathedral, or a stadium, or a building, etc., take one extra shotshoot the sign. That's right, later on you may be scrambling to find out the name of that amazing church you shot, and without a lot of research, you may be out of luck. That is, unless you took a shot of the sign that has the name of the church (or building, bridge, etc.). This has saved me on more than one occasion, and if you ever wind up selling the photos, you will absolutely need this info (stock agencies generally won't accept "Pretty Church in Cologne" as a saleable name for an image). Shoot the sign and you'll thank yourself later.

Tripod Wisdom

When it comes to tripods, it's like my buddy Bill Fortney says, "There are two types of tripods: those that are easy to carry and good ones." Even with the advent of carbon fiber, if your tripod feels really lightweight, it's a lightweight. Spend the extra money and get a kick-butt tripod you'll never regret it.

Showing Movement in the City



©ISTOCKPHOTO/TODD SMITH

If you want to show the hustle and bustle of a busy city, there's a simple trick that will do just that: slow down your shutter speed and let the people and traffic create motion trails within your image. It's easy (as long as you've got a tripod, which is absolutely required for this effect) just switch your camera's mode to shutter priority and set the shutter speed at either 1/16, 1/8, or 1/4 of a second (you can go longer if you have low enough light that it doesn't blow the highlights out in your photo). Then press the shutter, stand back, and in less than a second the motion of the city will reveal itself as the buildings, statues, lights, and signs stay still, but everything else has motion trails around it. If you're shooting at night, you can really have a blast with motion. Try to find a high vantage point (like from a hotel room window, or on a bridge, etc.) where you have a good view of traffic. Then put your camera on a tripod (an absolute must for this effect to work), go to shutter priority mode, set your exposure to 30 seconds, and take a shot. Thirty seconds later, you'll see long laser-like streaks of red lines (taillights and brake lights) and white lines (from the headlights), and you'll have an amazingly cool image that most folks won't get.

Use an Aperture That Takes It All In



When you're shooting in a city, unless you're shooting an object close up (where you intentionally want the background out of focus), chances are you want as much of the city in focus as possible, right? That's why an f-stop like f/11 works great in a city. It keeps pretty much everything in focus, as long as you don't set your focus on the closest thing in the frame. The rule of thumb is to focus on something about 1/3 of the way into the scene you're trying to capture.

For Maximum Impact, Look for Simplicity



SCOTT KELBY

The single thing that probably kills more properly exposed city life photographs than anything else is clutter—all the distracting background items, foreground items, and just general stuff that gets in the way. So, one of the big secrets to creating powerful and dramatic urban and travel shots is to strive for simplicity. Look for simplicity in your backgrounds, in your people shots, in your architectural elements, in every aspect—the simpler the surroundings, the more powerful the impact. Go out shooting with that very goal in mind. Look for the absence of distraction. Look for the absence of clutter and noise, watch for distracting elements that sneak into the top and sides of your frame, and create some photos that have great impact not because of what they have, but because of what they don't have—lots of junk.

The Monopod Scam



SCOTT KELBY

Now, a lot of places simply won't let you set up a tripod indoors (for example, try to set up a tripod in someplace like Grand Central Station. You can count the seconds before security arrives). However, here's the weird thing: while many places have a strict policy on tripods, they don't have a policy on monopods (a one-legged version of a tripod, often used for long-lens sports photography. Although they're not quite as stable as a good tripod, they're way more stable than hand-holding). So, the scam is this: if they say anything to you about shooting on a monopod, you can always counter with, "Hey, this isn't a tripod." It often stops them dead in their tracks. One reason they let you get away with a monopod is simply because they don't take up much space, and since there are no extended legs, there's nothing really for anyone to trip on (a concern for many building interiors, museums, etc.). So, if you know the indoor environment you're planning to shoot doesn't allow tripods, see if you can pull the old monopod scam. My guess is you'll float right by 'em.

What to Do When It's Been "Shot to Death"



©ISTOCKPHOTO/ARKADIUSZ LATKO

So, you're standing in front of the Eiffel Tower (or the Lincoln Memorial, or the Golden Gate Bridge, etc. any touristy landmark that's been shot to death). You know you have to shoot it (if you go to Paris and don't come back with at least one shot of the Eiffel Tower, friends and family members may beat you within an inch of your life with their bare hands), but you know it's been shot to death. There are a million postcards with the shot you're about to take. So what do you do to show your touristy landmark in a different way? Of course, the obvious thing (you'll find in every photography book) is to shoot it from a different angle. Frankly, I'd like to see an angle of the Eiffel Tower that hasn't been shot. But since, in many cases, that angle just doesn't exist, what do you do next? Try this: shoot the landmark in weather it's not normally seen in. That's right: shoot it when nobody else would want to shoot it. Shoot it in a storm, shoot it when it's covered in snow, shoot it when a storm is clearing, shoot it when the sky is just plain weird. Since the landmark doesn't change, shoot it when its surroundings are changing to get that shot that you just don't see every day. Here's another idea: Try shooting it from a difficult place to shoot from (in other words, shoot it from some view or vantage point that would be too much bother for most folks to consider. Find that "pain in the butt" viewpoint, and chances are you'll pretty much be shooting it there alone). Hey, it's worth a shot. (Get it? Worth a shot? Ah, forget it.)

Including the Moon and Keeping Detail



©ISTOCKPHOTO

This sounds like it would be easy a nighttime city skyline with a crisp detailed moon in the background, but most people wind up with a totally overexposed bright white circle, rather than the detailed moon shot they were hoping for. That's because it's just about impossible to get both the city (which takes a long exposure) and a detailed shot of the moon (which takes a very short exposure because it's actually quite bright) in the same shot. So, what photographers have been doing for years is creating multiple exposures (two images captured in the same frame). Now, there are some digital cameras today that let you create double exposures, but it's just as easy to take two separate photos one of the city, one of the moon and combine them later in Photoshop. First, start with your nighttime city skyline. Use a wide-angle lens (maybe an 18mm or 24mm), put your camera on a tripod (an absolute must), set your camera to aperture priority mode, choose f/11 as your f-stop, and your camera will choose the shutter speed for you (which may be as little as 20 or 30 seconds or as long as several minutes, depending on how dark the city is), then take the city skyline shot. Now switch to your longest telephoto (or zoom) lens (ideally 200mm or more). Switch to full manual mode, and set your aperture to f/11 and your shutter speed to 1/250 of a second. Zoom in as tight as you can get on the moon, so there's nothing but black sky and moon in your shot (this is critical no clouds, buildings, etc.), then take the shot. Now add the moon to your city skyline in Adobe Photoshop (visit www.scottkelbybooks.com/moon to see my step-by-step Photoshop tutorial on how to do this).

Shooting Fireworks



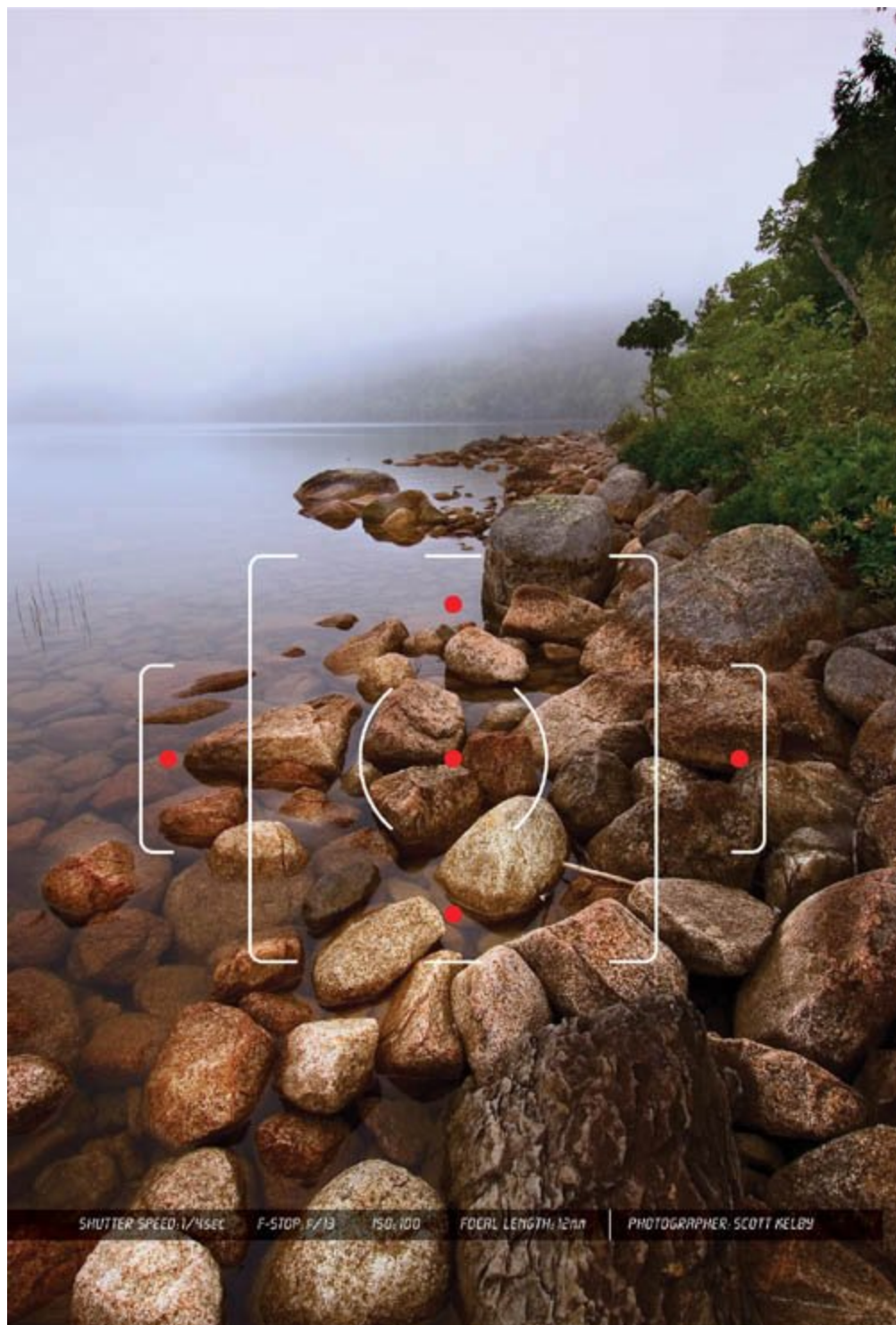
©ISTOCKPHOTO/PHILIPPE MAITZ

This is another one that throws a lot of people (one of my best friends, who didn't get a single crisp fireworks shot on the Fourth of July, made me include this tip just for him and the thousands of other digital shooters that share his pain). For starters, you'll need to shoot fireworks with your camera on a tripod, because you're going to need a slow enough shutter speed to capture the falling light trails, which is what you're really after. Also, this is where using a cable release really pays off, because you'll need to see the rocket's trajectory to know when to push the shutter button if you're looking in the viewfinder instead, it will be more of a hit or miss proposition. Next, use a zoom lens (ideally a 200mm or more) so you can get in tight and capture just the fireworks themselves. If you want fireworks and the background (like fireworks over Cinderella's Castle at Disney World), then use a wider lens. Now, I recommend shooting in full manual mode, because you just set two settings and you're good to go: (1) set the shutter speed to 4 seconds, and (2) set the aperture to f/11. Fire a test shot and look in the LCD monitor to see if you like the results. If it overexposes, lower the shutter speed to 3 seconds, then check the results again. *Tip:* If your camera has bulb mode (where the shutter stays open as long as you hold the shutter release button down), this works great hold the shutter button down when the rocket bursts, then release when the light trails start to fade. (By the way, most Canon and Nikon digital SLRs have bulb mode.) The rest is timing because now you've got the exposure and sharpness covered.

Chapter Ten. How to Print Like a Pro and Other Cool Stuff

After All, It's All About the Print!

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This is a great chapter to read if you're a doctor, because you're going to want a great printer, and you're going to want big prints (at least 13x19", right?), and that means you're probably going to need to spend some money, and nobody spends money like doctors. Ya know why? It's because people always get sick or get hurt. Why just the other day this photographer was in Trinidad shooting and the next thing you know he tumbles down this hillside and winds up in the hospital (I know that last sentence made it sound like he finally stopped tumbling when he hit the wall of the hospital, but that was misleadinghe actually was stopped by hitting a large llama grazing at the bottom of the hill, but luckily it was a pretty sharp llama, and she was able to summon an ambulance for him, but not before the llama put all his camera gear on eBay. Hey, I said she was pretty sharp). Anyway, who do you think is going to show up at the hospital to help this unfortunate accident victim? That's

righta doctor. And is this doctor going to fix this photographer for free? I doubt it. The doctor is going to get paid handsomely from the insurance carrier that covers the travel photographer. So what's this doctor going to do with the money? He's going to go on eBay and get a great deal on some camera gear. He'll probably save thousands. Now, what's he going to do with the savings? Buy a 13x19" printer. See, this is the wonder of market-driven economies and why we should all sell our camera equipment and go to medical school, because within a few years we'll all be able to buy some really nice gear.

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The Advantages of Shooting in RAW



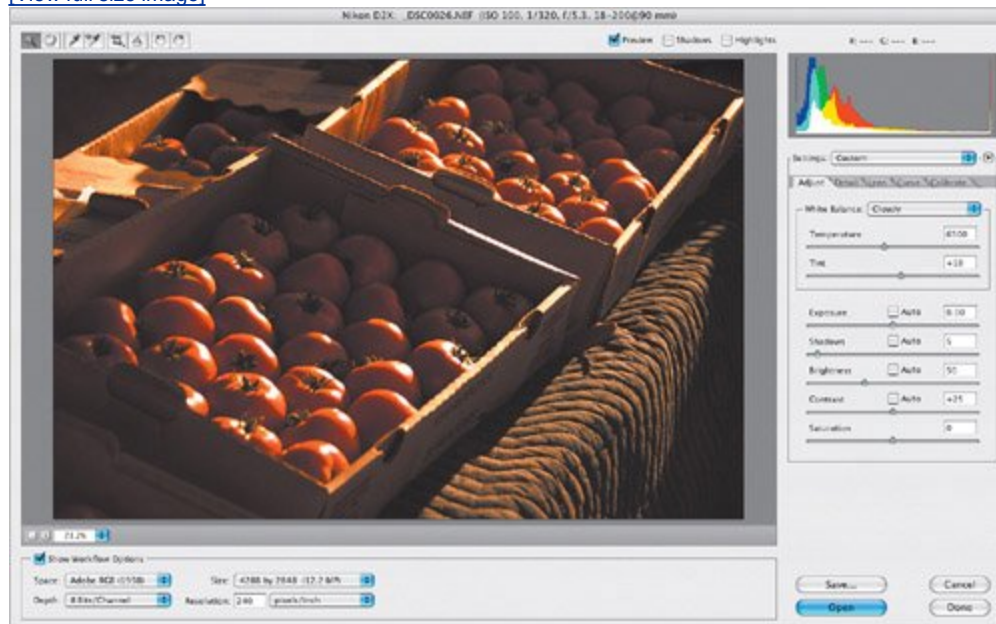
I've mentioned shooting in RAW several times in the book, but I haven't talked that much about it. RAW is an image quality mode, and most professionals today agree that RAW gives you two big advantages over the JPEG-quality images: (1) it provides the highest possible image quality because the photos are not compressed (JPEG files are compressed to a smaller file size by throwing away some of the original data), and (2) the images are just as they were captured by your camera's sensors, and no in-camera processing is done (when you shoot JPEGs your camera actually does some color correction, sharpening, etc., to make the JPEGs look good). When you shoot in RAW, your camera doesn't do any of this automatic correction; you get to do it yourself (including making white balance, exposure, shadow, and other decisions after the shot has been taken) either in Adobe Photoshop or in your camera manufacturer's RAW processing software. Pros love the control this gives them because they can process (and experiment with) RAW images themselves, and best of all they never damage the original (the RAW digital negative).

The Downside of Shooting in RAW

There are really only two: (1) RAW files are larger in size, so you'll fit about 1/3 fewer photos on your memory card, and (2) since RAW files are much larger in file size, it takes longer to do any editing with them in Photoshop.

How to Process RAW Photos in Photoshop

[\[View full size image\]](#)



SCOTT KELBY

Once you import RAW photos onto your computer, if you open them in Adobe Photoshop, a totally different dialog appears (like the one shown above). This is a RAW processing window called Adobe Camera Raw, and it was developed by Thomas Knoll, the same man who originally developed Adobe Photoshop in the first place. Adobe Camera Raw is pretty brilliantly designed. It lets you simply and easily process your RAW photo by choosing whichever white balance setting you'd like, and by choosing your exposure, shadow, and midtone settings, along with about a dozen or more other adjustments, so you can tweak your photo just the way you want to (and even fix exposure and lens problems) before you enter regular Photoshop for retouching and finishing touches. And best of all it never changes your original RAW photo, so you can always create new prints from your digital negative anytime you want. Don't forget this special dialog *only* appears when you set your camera to shoot in RAW quality mode.

Where to Learn More About RAW

If you want to learn more about processing your RAW photos in Adobe Photoshop, I have three suggestions: (1) Ben Willmore's Photoshop Training DVD called *Photoshop CS2 Mastering Camera Raw* , from www.photoshopvideos.com, (2) my book, *The Photoshop Book for Digital Photographers* , which has an entire chapter on processing RAW images step by step, or (3) Bruce Fraser's book, *Real World Camera Raw* .

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Compare Your LCD to Your Computer Monitor

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Once you've filled up a memory card with photos from your latest shoot, go ahead and open them on your computer in whatever software package you use to view and organize your photos (I use Adobe Lightroom, which is a new software application from Adobe especially designed for professional photographers. You can find out more at www.adobe.com), and then keep your camera nearby. Once you've got your photos opened on your computer, grab your camera and start comparing how the photos on your camera's LCD monitor look compared to the photos you're now seeing on your computer screen. This will give you a quick idea of how close your digital camera's LCD monitor is to what reality is, and that can be a big help when you're out shooting. For example, if you learn that your LCD makes everything look cooler than it really is on your computer screen (where you'll ultimately be editing your photos), then you know you don't have to worry about adding a warming filter to your lens to warm up your photos. If the LCD is too dark (compared to your computer screen and/or printer), then you know you need to shoot a little lighter for reality. Try this and you'll be amazed at how knowing how "true" your LCD is can improve your photography.

Organizing Your Photos with Lightroom

[\[View full size image\]](#)



SCOTT KELBY

Although I use Adobe Photoshop for all the serious retouching and high-end tweaking of my photographic work, I use a new product from Adobe called Adobe Lightroom for managing and organizing my thousands of digital photos, processing my RAW photos, creating onscreen slide shows, and printing out multi-photo spreads. This is an application designed from the ground up for photographers, is available for both Macintosh and Windows users, and it only costs a fraction of what Photoshop costs. Now, it certainly doesn't replace Photoshop, because it doesn't really allow for any retouching (removing spots, or wrinkles, or age spots and wrinkles, whitening teeth, or any one of a hundred things we do in Photoshop to make people look their very best), nor does it create the amazing special effects, cool layouts, and the myriad of things that only Photoshop can do, but then Lightroom isn't supposed to do all those things—it's for organizing and viewing your photos, and it does that pretty brilliantly I might add. If you get serious about this whole digital photography thing (and if you bought this book, you're getting serious), I recommend you check out Lightroom—especially because if you actually go and buy it, I get a cash kickback from Adobe. I'm kidding of course, but I wish I weren't.

How Many More Megapixels Do You Need?



3 megapixel = 5x7"



4 megapixel = 8x10"



5 megapixel = 11x14"



6 megapixel = 13x19"



8 megapixel = 16x20"



10 – 12 megapixel = 24x36"

There's a ton of confusion (also known as marketing hype) around megapixels, and many people truly believe that megapixels have to do with image quality—the higher the number of megapixels, the better the quality. Unfortunately, that's not true. So, if you were using that as an excuse to buy a new camera, that's not going to float with me (although your spouse may buy that line). Here's what megapixels really mean: how large can I print my final photograph? That's it. If you're not going to print anything larger than 8x10", then a 5-megapixel camera is absolutely all you need. In fact, it's really more than you need, but since 5 megapixels is about as few megapixels as you can buy these days, we'll leave it at that. If you want to routinely print 13x19" color prints, then you only need a 6-megapixel camera (I know, this is hard to swallow after years of thinking you needed 10 megapixels or more). So, what are today's 10- and 12-megapixel cameras for? Suckers. (Okay, not really, but you knew I was going to say that.) Actually, 10- and 12-megapixel cameras are for pros who need to print 24x36" poster-sized prints. If that's you, then it's time to pony up, but if you're not routinely printing poster-sized prints, a 6-megapixel camera is all most people will really ever need, so put away your checkbook. Hey, don't blame me. I'm trying to save you some money so you can buy some decent lenses and a fancy tripod.

Printing Lab-Quality 8x10s

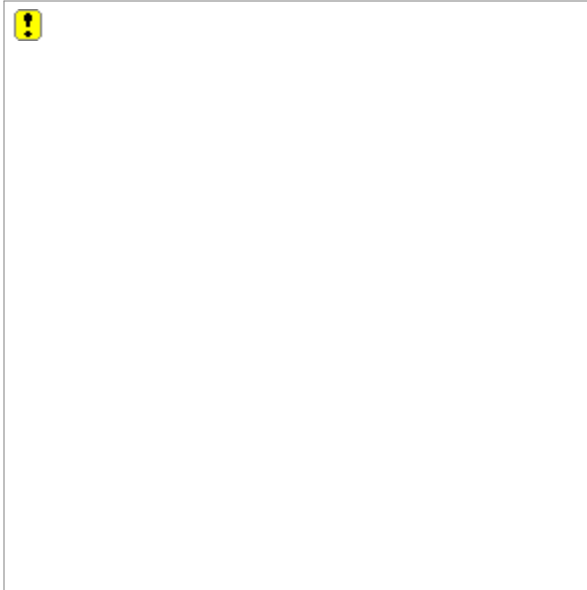


At some point, after putting all these techniques to use, you're going to want prints, and today many pro photographers create their own prints. Personally, I only use Epson printers, and about every other pro I know uses Epson printers as well, because they've become the standard for professional quality color and black-and-white inkjet printing. Now, before I start making recommendations as to which Epson printer to buy, I want you to know up front that the only reason I'm telling you this is because it's exactly what I'd tell any friend who asked. I don't get a kickback or cut from Epson. They have no idea I'm telling you this, so if you tell them, "Hey, Scott said I should buy an Epson," they'll say something along the lines of, "Scott who?" I personally have three Epson printers, and I love them dearly for three main reasons:

1. They work pretty flawlessly most of the time, but if I do run into a bump along the way, they have live 24-hour tech support, which is actually quite good.
2. They not only sell the printers, but the paper as well, and I love their paper.
3. The output is absolutely stunning. The quality prints that come out of my Epson printers still amaze me.

For printing borderless 4x6s, 5x7s, and 8x10s, I use (and highly recommend) the Epson Stylus Photo R800. It costs about \$399. Worth every penny.

Printing Lab-Quality 13x19" Prints



A popular print size with pro photographers is the 13x19" large print, and the Epson Stylus Photo R2400 is the king of this realm. I've never seen another printer even touch it, except for maybe the R2200 it replaced. Its color output is really stunning, but where the R2400 really kills is when you print black-and-white prints. You'll lose your mind. Plus, the R2400 uses Epson's UltraChrome K3 archival-quality inks, so your prints are going to last longer than you will by a long shot. Of course, besides the 13x19" prints, it also does all of the smaller sizes as well (Epson claims it does 11x14s in less than two minutes, but I can't swear to this because once I printed my first borderless 13x19" print, that was the last time I wanted to print an 11x14", and you'll probably feel the same "bigger is better" way I do, too). This is as in love with a printer as I've ever become. It costs around \$850, which, for what it does, is a bargain.

Printing 16x20s The Pros' Top Choice



Pros who sell their prints know that the bigger the print, the bigger the paycheck, and maybe that's why so many favor the 16x20" large print format, and the printer for that is Epson's Stylus Pro 4800. Although it technically prints 17" by as wide as you want to go, the size everybody's trying to hit is that 16x20" sweet spot, and the 4800 does it wonderfully well, but be forewarned at this point, Epson doesn't make 16x20" paper (which totally baffles me since that's the size preferred by most pros). There are, though, other paper manufacturers (like Red River Paper) who make 16x20" paper that is designed to be used with the 4800, so unless you like cutting down larger-sized paper to 16x20", you might want to consider that. Other than that cutting chore (which may or may not bother you it bugs the heck out of me personally, but that's just me), the 4800 is a dream machine.

Which Paper Should You Print On?

[\[View full size image\]](#)



If you're getting an Epson printer, then you definitely want to print on Epson paper (with only that Red River Paper exception I mentioned for the 4800). Epson paper not only works best on Epson printers, sometimes it's the only paper that will work (for example, one time when I was in a bind, I tried some HP paper. It didn't work at all the paper went through the printer and ink came out, but it looked like...well, let's just say it didn't work and leave it at that). So, which papers do I recommend? Here they are:

Epson Velvet Fine Art Paper: This is a cotton paper with a matte coating that looks like watercolor paper and has a wonderful texture that gives your photos almost a painted feel. Clients love the feel of this paper and it's usually the first thing they notice.

Epson Premium Luster Photo Paper: This is probably my all-around favorite paper (and a favorite with many pros) because, although it definitely has a sheen to it, it does so without being overly glossy. It's that perfect paper between glossy and matte.

Epson Enhanced Matte Paper: This is a great paper for black-and-white prints, and it has both a nice texture and finish that gives a surprisingly crisp detail.

All of these papers are available directly from Epson.com, but I also often find these at my local CompUSA in sizes up to 13x19".

What Determines Which Paper You Use?



SCOTT KELBY

So, how do you know which paper to use? Believe it or not, there's an easy way the paper you choose to print on is determined by one thing: the subject matter of your photo.

For example, if you're printing things of a softer nature, like flowers, birds, landscapes, waterfalls, or any type of image where you want a softer feel, try a textured paper like Epson's Velvet Fine Art Paper (provided you are printing to an Epson printer), which works wonderfully well for these types of images. This is your choice any time you want that "artsy" feel to your photography, and it also works well when your photo isn't tack sharp. Try it for black-and-white photography, too (especially on Epson's R2400), when you want extra texture and depth.

For serious portrait work, architecture, city life, travel, and finely detailed landscape shots, try Epson's Premium Luster Photo Paper. Anything with lots of detail looks great on this paper, and it really makes your colors vivid. So, when the shot has lots of detail and sharpness, lots of color, and you need it to "pop," this is the ticket for sharp, crisp prints.

Epson's Enhanced Matte Paper is a nice choice for black-and-white photos. Enhanced Matte Paper minimizes reflections so photos look especially good behind glass (they pick up a little of the shine that's missing in all matte finishes), so if you're thinking of framing your prints, you won't be disappointed with the final result. However, this isn't an acid-free paper, so printing color photos on it is dicey because they may warm over time.

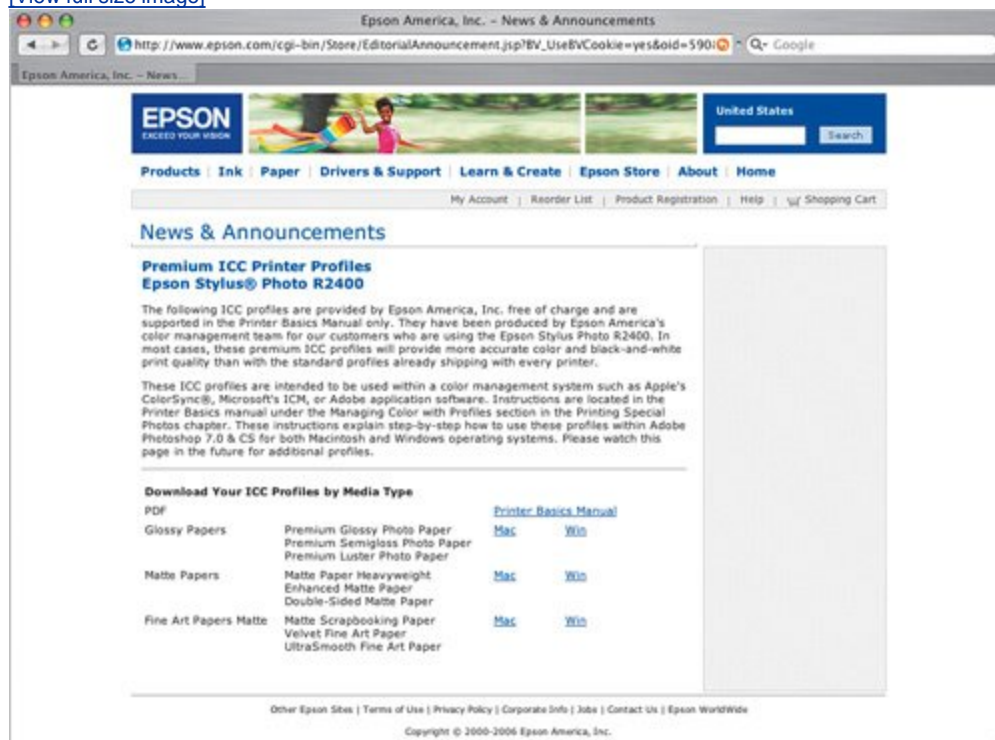
Getting Your Monitor to Match Your Printer



Color management (the art of getting your color inkjet prints to match what you see on your monitor) has gotten dramatically easier in recent years, but the key to getting a color management system to work is getting your monitor color calibrated. A few years ago, this was a costly and time-consuming process usually only undertaken by paid consultants, but now anybody can do it because (1) it's very affordable now, and (2) it pretty much does all the calibrating work automatically while you just sit there and munch on a donut (you don't have to eat a donut, but it doesn't hurt). Probably the most popular monitor calibrator in use by pros these days is the Eye-One Display 2 from GretagMacbeth (recently purchased by X-Rite). It sells for around \$230, and that's pretty much all that stands in the way of having your monitor match your prints. Well, that and downloading the free color profiles for the paper you're printing on (more on that on the next page).

Download the Color Profiles for Your Paper

[\[View full size image\]](#)



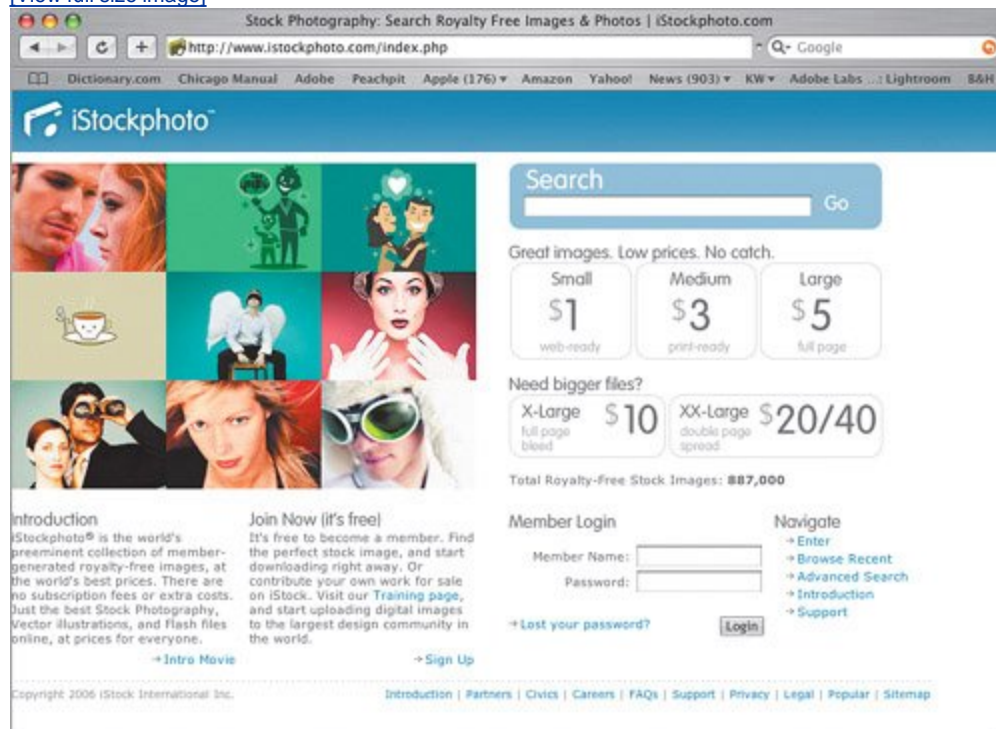
If you buy Epson papers (or any of the major name-brand professional inkjet papers), you'll definitely want to go to Epson's (or your paper manufacturer's) website, go to their downloads page for your particular inkjet printer, and download their free color profiles for the exact paper you'll be printing to. Once you install these free color profiles (they install with just a double-click), when you go to Photoshop to print your photo, you can choose the exact printer and paper combination you'll be printing to. This gives you the best possible results (and color fidelity) for your particular paper and printer. The pros do this every time and it makes a huge difference in the quality of their prints.

Tip for More Predictable Color

Your printer has a color management system, and Photoshop has one, too. Having two color management systems going at the same time is a guaranteed recipe for bad color. So, if you're printing from Photoshop, you should definitely turn *off* the color management system for your printer and use Photoshop's instead (in other words, let Photoshop determine the right colors).

Selling Your Photos as "Stock" Online

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Selling photos to a stock agency is a dream of many photographers (pros included), but generally only the best of the best get this opportunity. Until now. Now you can start selling royalty-free stock photography today thanks to iStockphoto.com, which is a community of photographers all around the world who sell their photos online as stock (which means you give the rights to other people to buy, download, and use your photos in brochures, ads, websites, flyers, and other collateral material graphic designers and Web designers create for their clients). The great thing is anybody that follows their guidelines can upload their own photos and start selling them right away as part of iStockphoto's huge database of images. Now, you only get paid on how many people actually buy your photo, and since the photos sell for \$1 (for small size), \$3 (for medium size), and \$5 (for full-page), you're going to need to move a lot of photos to make this a business. But let me tell you this, there are photographers who make their living (and their Porsche payments) strictly from what they sell on iStockphoto.com, because iStock-photo is used by about a bazillion people around the world. Needless to say, the better quality your work is, and the more popular the subjects are, the more your images will get downloaded. How popular has iStockphoto.com become? Well, Getty Images, one of the world's leading and most respected providers of high-quality stock images, recently bought them out that gives you any idea.

A Quick Peek at My Gear



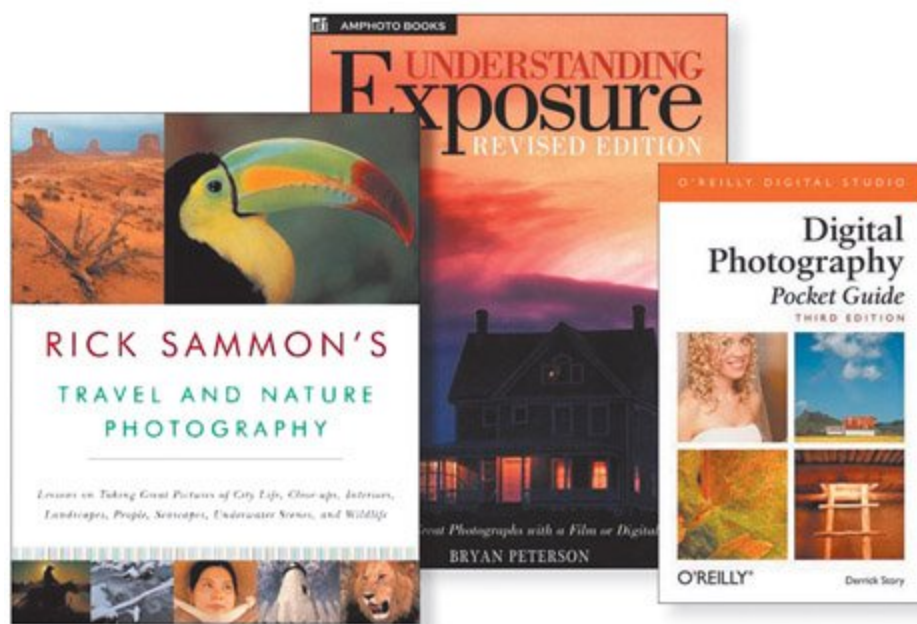
For those interested in what kind of photo gear I use, here's a quick look: my main camera is a Nikon D2X and my backup camera body is a Nikon D200. I carry three lenses with me when I'm shooting: a Nikon 1224mm f/4 wide-angle zoom, a 70200mm VR f/2.8 zoom, and a 24120mm VR f/3.5 zoom. I also have a 70180mm f/4.5 macro zoom lens. I use polarizers, split neutral gradient filters, and UV filters. That's it.

I use a Nikon SB800 external flash and I have both an Epson P-2000 and P-4000, and an 80-GB LaCie Rugged All-Terrain Hard Drive (as my second backup drive, because I either carry the P-2000 or the P-4000, but not both at the same time).

I use a Slik carbon fiber tripod, and a Really Right Stuff BH-55 ballhead (the mother of all ballheads, if you ask me). I use five SanDisk Extreme III CompactFlash memory cards (three 4-GB and two 2-GB cards). Lastly, I lug all this gear around in two ways: on most days I pull (it rolls) a Lowepro Pro Roller 1, but when I want to travel light I use a Lowepro Stealth Reporter D200 AW Shoulder Bag, which works great!

Some Books I Personally Recommend

[\[View full size image\]](#)



I hope this book has ignited your passion to learn more about the craft of photography, and if that's the case, here are some books I recommend (in no particular order):

1. *Understanding Exposure: How to Shoot Great Photographs with a Film or Digital Camera* by Bryan Peterson
2. *Rick Sammon's Travel and Nature Photography* by Rick Sammon
3. *Digital Photography Pocket Guide, Third Edition* by Derrick Story
4. *Bill Fortney's Great Photography Workshop* by Bill Fortney
5. *Rick Sammon's Complete Guide to Digital Photography: 107 Lessons on Taking, Making, Editing, Storing, Printing, and Sharing Better Digital Images* by Rick Sammon

If you just love great photography, here are some photo books I recommend:

1. *America From 500 Feet!* by Bill and Wesley Fortney
2. *Golden Poppies of California: In Celebration of Our State Flower* by George Lepp
3. *Flying Flowers* by Rick Sammon
4. *Window Seat: The Art of Digital Photography and Creative Thinking* by Julieanne Kost
5. *Through the Lens: National Geographic's Greatest Photographs*, edited by Leah Bendavid Val

Learn from Me on *Adobe®Photoshop®* TV

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If you want to learn more about Adobe Photoshop and how to process and edit your digital photos, then check out *Adobe® Photoshop® TV* (www.photoshoptv.com). It's a 30-minute weekly video show that I co-host with my friends (and fellow Photo-shop gurus), Dave Cross and Matt Kloskowski. Each week we give you the latest tips, step-by-step tutorials, Photoshop news, and lots of other cool stuff (like prizes and contests). *Adobe® Photoshop® TV* is free, and you can watch it right there on our web-site or you can download it and watch it on your computer or your iPod (as a video podcast). In fact, you can subscribe to the show for free, and each Monday the show will be automatically downloaded to your computer, so you can watch it at your leisure. Here's how to subscribe:

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2. Click on the Podcasts link on the left side of the iTunes Music Store page.
3. In the Search field on the left side of the Podcast page, type in "Photoshop" and press the Return (PC: Enter) key on your keyboard.
4. In a couple of seconds, you'll find Photoshop TV. Click on it, and then press the Subscribe button. That's it—you're subscribed. Now you can watch it from right within the iTunes window (at any size you'd like), or you can download it to your video iPod and watch it there.

Chapter Eleven. Photo Recipes to Help You Get "The Shot"

The Simple Ingredients That Make It All Come Together

[\[View full size image\]](#)



Hey, it's the end of the book, and now is as good a time as any to let you in on a secret. There's really no way in hell we're going to get those really magical shots (like you see in magazines such as *Outdoor Photographer* or *Shutterbug*). That's because when we get out to that prime shooting location at the crack of dawn to hopefully capture one of these once-in-a-lifetime shots, carrying so much gear that our chiropractors are on speed dial, we'll soon find that it's too late there are already a dozen or so photographers set up there waiting for that magical light, too. Since they were there first, the only spot left on that tiny plateau is behind them, and every shot you take is going to have some, if not all, of their camera gear fully in your frame ruining any possible chance of you getting "the shot". But this chapter is all about recipes for getting the shot, and I've got a special recipe for this very situation. Just as the golden light appears over the horizon, you quietly slide your foot inside one of their tripod

legs, then quickly pull your foot back, toppling over their entire rig, and as their thousands of dollars of gear begins to crash violently to the ground, you deftly press the cable release on your camera and capture that amazing vista as the sound of broken glass echoes off the canyon walls. Ahh, that my friends is the magical sound of you getting "the shot". If you hear the faint sound of sobbing in the distance, it all becomes that much sweeter. Enjoy.

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The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot

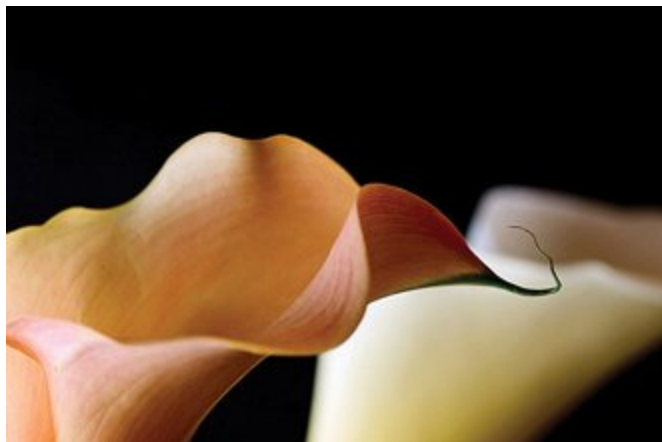


SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: the water is very still; you can see through the water because there's very little reflection; the overall tone is blueish; the lighting and shadows are very soft; you get a full sweeping view.

1. This type of light doesn't happen at 5:30 p.m. you have to get up early and be in place ready to shoot at 5:30 a.m., right before the sun comes up.
2. To get really still water, you also have to shoot at dawn. If you shoot this same scene at sunset, the winds will have picked up and the water won't be as smooth.
3. Set up your tripod without extending the legs, so your lens is close to the rocks for a low, more interesting angle (remember, most point-and-shooters would have shot it standing up the average viewpoint we usually see, which would be boring).
4. To remove some of the reflection from the water and see some of those rocks, you'll need to screw on a polarizing filter and rotate the filter around until, like magic, the reflection disappears (that's right polarizing filters are not just for skies).
5. Use a wide-angle lens to give the shot its "vastness". If you have an 1880mm zoom, set it at 18mm (the widest setting for that lens).
6. Use aperture priority mode and choose an f-stop like f/22 to give you good sharpness throughout the entire photo, from the rocks to the mountains.
7. To further enhance that "blue morning" effect, if you're shooting in JPEG, change your white balance to Fluorescent, take a test shot, then look at the results in your LCD monitor. If you're shooting RAW, you can choose your white balance later in Photoshop.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: soft, natural light; shot on a black background, very close to the subject. This type of shot is easier than it looks.

1. You need a black background behind your flowers. These were sitting in a vase, with black poster board placed about 3 feet behind them. You can use black velvet (which works even better than what was used here) that you buy from the local fabric store.
2. You have to set up your tripod's height so it's level with the flowers. You don't want to shoot down on them; you want to shoot them at eye level, so put the vase on a table so they're up high enough, then position your tripod at the same height.
3. Use natural light. These were positioned about 4 feet from an open window that wasn't getting direct light. Don't shoot straight into the window, shoot from the side so your flowers are getting side lighting.
4. Use a macro or close-up lens to get this close to the flowers. When you use a macro (or close-up lens), the depth of field is very shallow automatically, so the flower(s) in the background will already be blurry, and that's what you want.
5. The f-stop was f/5.6, which again gives you maximum sharpness on the object closest to the camera, and everything behind will be blurry. It was shot in aperture priority mode (which is an ideal mode for controlling your depth of field). When shooting with a macro lens, the depth of field is much more shallow.
6. To get super sharp, you need to be super still; use the mirror lock-up trick in [Chapter 1](#).

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: your subject fills the frame from side-to-side; no visible sky; great contrast of color; interesting placement of subject.

1. The star of this shot is really the contrasting colors otherwise it would just be another "rowboat in the water" shot. There were dozens of boats in the harbor that day, but this one was the only one with such great contrasting colors. The white and salmon color against that blue water creates lots of visual interest through color.
2. To get this wonderful light and the soft shadows, there are only two times of day you can shoot either at dawn or dusk. This was taken at dusk, and that's why the colors are so vivid (the colors are vivid because the sun isn't washing them out).
3. To get this close to the boat, you either have to be in another boat or on the dock with a long lens, which is the case here. Put on your longest zoom lens and zoom in so that the boat almost fills the width of the frame.
4. You must use a tripod to get a shot like this for two reasons: (a) it's dusk so the light is low and you really can't hand-hold and get a sharp photo, and (b) you're using a long lens. The further you're zoomed in, the more any tiny vibration will be exaggerated and your photos will be blurry. You've gotta use a tripod for shots in low light with a zoom.
5. The other key to getting a shot like this is composition. By putting the boat up top, rather than dead center, it creates loads of visual interest and draws your eye right to the subject.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: fascinating color; high contrast between the car and the background; the composition of the shot tells a story.

1. This is one of those city life shots, and the best way to get them is to be ready for them to happen. As I mentioned in [Chapter 9](#), when you're in a city, be ready for any shot by shooting in program mode. The flash won't pop up on you (ruining the shot), but you can basically point and shoot. This unexpected shot happened when I was walking back to my hotel in Stockholm, Sweden. It was graduation day for Stockholm's high school students, and many were riding around town in convertibles and open bed trucks cheering, waving Swedish flags, and celebrating their achievement. I had my camera over my shoulder and some incredibly delicious fries in my hands (it's a long story). Anyway, while carefully balancing my fries (so as not to lose a single delicious strand), this car pulled up beside me. My camera was in program mode, so with my one free hand I held up the camera and got the shot. Had I been in aperture priority mode (my usual shooting mode), I would have missed it while setting the aperture because a split-second later the car drove away.
2. By including just a little of the driver's arm, passenger's arm, and flag, the photo tells a story: What were they doing? Why were they carrying flags? Where are they going? However, an even better composition would have a little more room showing on the left side, in front of the car, so the car had somewhere to go.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot

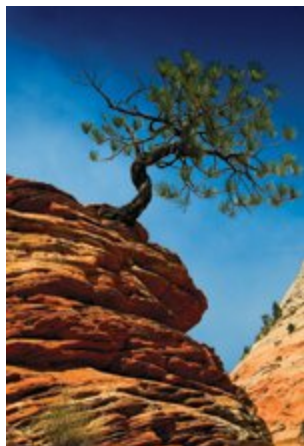


SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: still water; close-up shot of the flower, but obviously not a macro shot; fairly soft light, but well-defined shadows.

1. This type of shot is taken in open shade (by that, I mean the water was in the shadows, under some sort of cover). That's why the shadows are pretty well defined enough light was getting under the shade that the shadows were maintained. Look for open shade (or cloudy days where white puffy clouds act as your softbox, diffusing the light) to get shots like this, where the colors are vibrant and the light is still soft.
2. Use as long a zoom lens as you have to get the flowers to fill the frame as much as possible. In this case, I used a 300mm zoom, but this was a rare instance when I didn't have a tripod with me, and you generally can't hand-hold a 300mm lens steady enough to get a sharp photo, so I improvised. I shot this from a bridge overlooking a small pond, so I rested the lens on the handrail of the bridge to steady the camera and lens and it worked perfectly. In a pinch, rest your camera (or lens) on anything stable.
3. Everything in the shot is at the same depth (there is really no foreground or background it's all at the same distance from the camera), so an f-stop like f/11 works well for shots like this when you want everything at the same distance in focus.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: you're shooting a well-known subject (this lone tree in Zion National Park) in harsh direct light; it has surprisingly warm colors for a shot taken in noon-day sun.

1. Sometimes you have to take the shot in less than ideal lighting situations (I was passing through Zion on my way to another shoot, so I could either take the shot in bad light or not take it at all). In cases like this, pull out your polarizing filter and rotate until it adds more blue to the lifeless sky.
2. Make a composition decision that will make the shot interesting. Point-and-shooters would center the tree. You want to either: (a) make the rock below the tree have the most emphasis in the frame, or (b) make the sky above the tree have the most emphasis. (In the shot shown here, I made the rocks below the tree have more importance in the frame, but I shot it both ways some with lots of blue sky above the tree, with the tree way down low in the frame, and then some like this, with the tree near the top, with lots of rock below it. I went with the rock shot, because I felt it was more interesting than the blue, cloudless sky.)
3. Shoot in aperture priority mode and set your f-stop to f/11, which is a great f-stop when you want a really sharp shot and you're not trying to put any part of the photo visibly out of focus. It's kind of the no-brainer f-stop. So is f/8.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: soft, directional light; visual interest through the composition; no flash used so skin tones look natural.

1. Set your subjects up about 6 to 8 feet from an open window with natural light coming in. The key is to make sure the light coming in through that window isn't direct sunlight, so the light is soft not harsh beams of light. Don't use flash. Let the natural light do all the work.
2. Put your camera on a tripod. Although there is natural light, the light is lower than you'd think, and for maximum sharpness you want your camera on a tripod.
3. Position your subjects so the light comes in from one side (in the photo above, the light is coming from a window to the right of the bride).
4. Focus on the subject's eyes (in this case, the bride) because if her eyes aren't in focus, the shot goes in the trash.
5. Shoot in aperture priority mode with your f-stop at f/11, which is great for portraits.
6. By not positioning the father and bride in the dead center of the photo, it makes the portrait that much stronger and more visually appealing. Kick them over to the left or right a little bit, so they don't look dead center.
7. The glow around them was added in Photoshop. To see this Photoshop technique step-by-step, visit www.scottkelbybooks.com/glow.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: smooth, silky water; dramatic skies; sharp detail from front to back; contrast of color in the sky and the water.

1. To get a shot like this, with the silky water look, requires a number of things. First among them is you have to shoot it in very, very low light (before the sun comes up or well after it goes down this shot was taken more than one hour after sunset) because you have to leave the shutter open long enough (10 seconds or more) so the waves can wash in and out while your shutter is open that's what gives it the silky look. Normally, leaving your shutter open for 10 or more seconds will totally blow out your sky. That's why you do it well after sunset so there's little light in the sky but don't worry, the long exposure will capture what little light is there, giving you a shot like the one above. If you have a neutral density gradient filter, you can also use this so you don't have to wait quite as late to shoot, because it darkens just the sky for you.
2. Set your camera to shutter priority mode, set your exposure to 10 seconds, and try a test shot to see if the ground is light enough (the sky won't be the problem). Your camera will automatically choose your f-stop in shutter priority mode.
3. If your camera has a feature called long exposure noise reduction, turn it on before you take your shot and it will help reduce noise in your shadow areas.
4. Shoot low by setting up your tripod very low to the ground (don't extend the legs), and use either a cable release or your camera's self timer to reduce camera shake.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: flower fills the frame; the background is out of focus; contrasting colors; visual interest through composition.

1. Shoot with a zoom lens use your longest zoom to get in tight and get the flower to fill the frame. This was shot with a 200mm lens, and the flower was actually a few feet away in a garden.
2. Shoot at flower level. Set up your tripod so you are level with the flower (remember, don't shoot down on flowers), which requires you to squat down (knee pads are great for getting shots like this I wish I had remembered mine that day).
3. Shoot in aperture priority mode and use the smallest number f-stop your lens will allow (in this case, on this particular lens, it was f/5.6) to keep the flower in focus but the background out of focus.
4. Now, bee patient (okay, that was lame). Actually, I saw bees flying around from flower to flower, so I sat there with my camera focused on the flower until a bee actually landed on the flower. Then all I had to do was press the shutter button.
5. The shot was taken in natural light, but it looks fairly soft because the sun had tucked behind some white fluffy clouds, which are great for flower shots because it diffuses the harsh direct light. I didn't set up my tripod until the sun actually went into a large bank of clouds, so patience (for the right light, and for the bee to land) pays off.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: nice light; vivid colors; soft shadows; motion, which adds excitement and interest to the photo.

1. To get motion in the shot, you have to shoot with a slower shutter speed. Set your mode to shutter priority and choose 1/8 of a second or slower, so your shutter is open long enough to capture any movement as a blur. With this slow of a shutter speed, you'll need to be on a tripod so the rest of the photo remains sharp.
2. To get the rich, vivid colors and soft light, you'll need to shoot a shot like this in the late afternoon when the sun is low in the sky, or in open shade, and this shot had a little of both. If you look closely, you'll see the sunlight is coming from the right (as seen on the singer's face) and that adds some dramatic lighting, but because this was taken downtown on the side of a building that was already mostly in the shade, the light is very soft. By the way, you'd think direct sunlight would make the colors more vivid, but it usually does just the opposite it washes the colors out.
3. You can shoot a shot like this in aperture priority mode, choose a play-it-safe f-stop like f/11, and in the low light of the late afternoon/early evening your camera will automatically choose a slow enough shutter speed for you that will exaggerate any motion in the shot.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: perfect light reflected on the side of the car; beautiful color in the sky; it's a sunset shot that's not just about the sunset.

1. Shoot with a wide-angle lens, and turn your camera vertical (portrait orientation) to capture both the subject (in this case, a car) and enough of the sky to make the shot visually appealing. This was taken with a 24120mm wide-angle lens, with the lens length at 24mm.
2. To get a shot like this, once again you have two choices: (a) shoot at dawn, or (b) shoot at dusk (this particular shot was taken at dusk, just after the sun dipped into the ocean in the Marin Headlands overlooking San Francisco).
3. In lighting this low, you'll have to shoot on a tripod to get a sharp photo.
4. Compose the shot with your subject (the car) at the bottom of the frame to add visual interest, rather than centering the car in the frame which would give this more of a snapshot feel.
5. The rest is just positioning your camera to make the most of the reflection on the side of the car. The beautiful light is really doing all the work you're just waiting for the right moment to press the shutter release (actually, you're better off in this low light either using a cable release or your camera's self timer to reduce camera shake and give you a sharper photo).

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: interesting point of view; great contrast of colors; interesting composition.

1. To get a shot like this, you need a very low angle to shoot from, and that's what really makes the shot interesting. The angle isn't one you'd see very often because your average photographer would take the shot standing up (in fact, I was surrounded by photographers doing just that. Just in case you were wondering, this shot was taken outside a Lamborghini dealer located in a downtown area). To get this shot, which was hand-held, I sat in the middle of the street while my buddy looked out for cars.
2. To get the red car in the center in sharp focus and make the other cars softer in focus, shoot in aperture priority mode, choose a low number f-stop (in this case, it was f/5.6), and shoot with a zoom lens (this was taken with an 18-200mm zoom, with the lens at 180mm). The reason the yellow car in front is out of focus is because of how depth of field works: 1/3 of the area in front of your focus area (the red car) will be out of focus, and 2/3 of the area behind your focus area will be out of focus.
3. Another thing that makes this photo work (besides the interesting angle of view) is the close-up view of the cars, leaving more of the story (the rest of the cars) out of view.
4. The rest is just the luck of coming across a row of brightly-colored Lamborghinis on an overcast day.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot

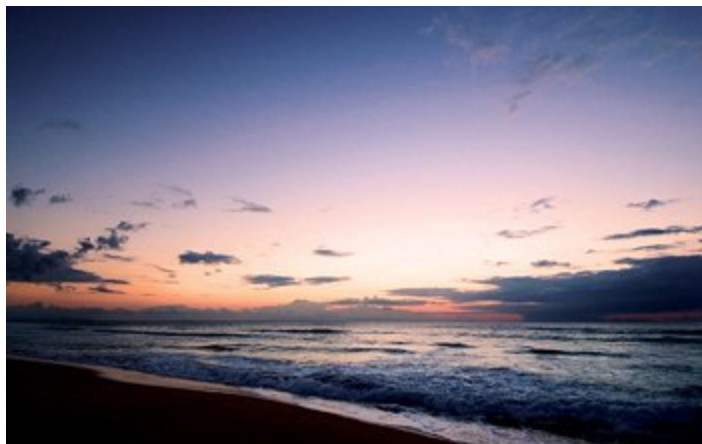


SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: colors; visual interest inside the window; composition that shows details.

1. The key to this shot is composition in the viewfinder. Don't try to capture the whole building or the entire wall. What makes this shot interesting is that you're not trying to capture everything you're just showing one detail of the building, which suggests the whole. Plus, by getting in close, it begs the question: "What's inside that window? Who put those things there? What's in those blue boxes?" It makes the viewer think. Also, the window isn't dead center it's off to the left, which adds to the visual interest.
2. To capture a window in a city life shot like this, you're going to need a zoom lens (this was shot with an 18200mm zoom, with the length around 100mm).
3. You can shoot this in program mode and have the camera do all the work (as I mentioned earlier in the book, I often shoot in program mode while shooting city life so I can quickly get the shot without having to make any adjustments to the camera).
4. A polarizing filter will help you see through the glass by reducing glare.
5. City life is usually hard to capture with a tripod, because the shooting is often spontaneous and if you set up a tripod in a downtown area, the only spontaneous thing that will probably happen these days is the response of the security guards, so it's often best to hand-hold your shots.

The Recipe for Getting This Type of Shot



SCOTT KELBY

Characteristics of this type of shot: the classic sunset shot, but not shot in the classic snapshot way.

1. Use the widest wide-angle lens you've got (this was taken with a 1224mm zoom, with the length set at 12mm for maximum wideness).
2. What makes this work is the fact that the horizon line isn't dead center (and sadly, dead center is where amateurs work so hard to get the horizon line). When shooting a shot like this, make your choice between these two: (a) you want to emphasize the beach, or (b) you want to emphasize the sky. In most cases, since you're shooting a sunset after all, make the sky the star of the show by putting the horizon line in the lower third of the frame (as shown above). Now, most people shooting sunsets don't include the beach at all—they're attracted to the sun and the horizon, so their sunset shots are usually made up of just sea and sky, but by including a little bit of beach, it helps lead the eye and tell the story.
3. It doesn't much matter which shooting mode you use, because there's no important object to focus on—you pretty much want it all in focus, so you can use program mode or aperture priority mode with your f-stop set to anything from f/8 to f/16 and everything will look sharp from front to back.
4. I know I've beat this to death, but you're shooting in low light; it's tripod time.

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